

Greetings all. Today's topic is the history of PPE (well, a very short one anyhow!)

PPE or Personal Safety Equipment has been around for a long time. In fact it's probably been used for thousands of years!

It's been reported that cave men put turtle shells on their heads to help protect them. I'm not sure if that's true or not, but certainly thousands of years ago people would wear sandals to protect their feet from the hard rocky ground. It could be said that this was PPE. But war was probably the biggest factor in the development of PPE. Gladiators and Roman soldiers wore vests and helmets and used shields to protect themselves. World War I saw the need for respirators to protect soldiers from gas poisoning.

Most of us though would rather not think about PPE for protection in a war situation, but for those of us who work in construction and around cranes and similar, PPE is a common piece of safety equipment that we sometimes take for granted.

The hard hats we wear have been developed over many years to provide a light-weight but tough protective barrier for our head. The hats we wear today have evolved from tar covered cloth hats, to leather caps, then metal helmets as once again were used in WWI. An American by the name of Edward Dickinson Bullard is credited with having developed the hard hats we wear today after seeing the tin hats worn by WWI soldiers.



The safety harnesses we now wear are a far cry from having a bit of rope wrapped and tied around your waist as once was the case (think mountain climbing!)

In ancient times

people wrapped cloth around their hands for protection. Today, properly designed protective gloves are used. The riggers gloves of today are much lighter and more flexible than the ones I first used some 40 years ago that were made of fairly stiff and bulky leather.



Eye protection used to be very bulky and unattractive, but now it looks like designer sunglasses in many cases. Hearing protection, safety boots and shoes are all much improved these days. You can get safety shoes now that look like any sports shoe or dress shoe might, so they are not only a protective device, but look good to boot (no pun intended!)

Of course Australia's most famous PPE wearer would have to be Ned Kelly! His PPE is now preserved for all to see at the State Library of Victoria.

We may take the PPE we wear today for granted, but you can be assured that it has evolved over a very long period of time to what it is today.

So please, don't forget to wear it!

Cheers for this week and stay safe.

