

MAXIMIZE

FR protection

Photo courtesy of PK Safety.

Consider all your workplace exposures to ensure compliance

By RICK PEDLEY

Whether you're working around dangerous chemicals, electrical systems, or fire-prone areas, you need to make sure you're wearing the right flame-resistant (FR) clothing. If a fire occurs, FR clothing will minimize the severity of the burns, improving your chances of survival. If your employees are working around potential fire hazards, it's your job to keep them safe by ensuring everyone is wearing proper FR clothing. Failing to provide FR rated workwear puts the health and safety of your employees at risk.

Not all FR protective gear is created equal. Keep these considerations in mind when searching for the right FR clothing for you and your staff.

A thorough safety evaluation of your work environment is a must before choosing your clothing.

Identify potential hazards

The first step is to evaluate all the potential hazards you and your employees may be exposed to on the job. Every industry comes with its own set of risks. You or your employees may be exposed to more than just potential fire hazards, such as potent chemicals, excessive heat, sharp equipment, and other kinds of workplace accidents. Whatever protective clothing you choose, it should protect

you and your employees from all these foreseeable hazards simultaneously. This may mean some combination of different garments where a variety of hazards exist. A thorough safety evaluation of your work environment is a must before choosing your clothing.

Comply with industry regulations

Certain industries come with safety standards for FR clothing, as outlined by OSHA. The NFPA has created the NFPA 2112 UL Classification, which

Properly marked FR clothing will have the ratings clearly stated.

sets safety requirements for manufacturers and certifying agencies that protect workers from flash fire exposure and injury by performance requirements and test methods for FR fabric and garments. From proper maintenance and cleaning recommendations to inspection frequency and retirement criteria, FR workwear has an extensive list of requirements necessary in order to be UL Classified.

Depending on which industry you call home, research the latest workplace safety requirements to make sure your FR clothing meets all industry standards. Workplace safety standards are set based on the Hazard Risk Category (HRC). The NFPA 70E ranks the HRC from 1 to 4 and each category comes with its own requirements for FR clothing.

HRC 1 comes with a minimum arc rating of 4 cal/cm² and HRC 2 comes with a minimum arc rating of 8 cal/cm². Proper clothing for both includes arc-rated shirts and pants or arc-rated/flame-resistant coveralls.

HRC 3 comes with a minimum arc rating of 25 cal/cm² and HRC 4 comes with a minimum arc rating of 40 cal/cm². Proper clothing for both includes arc-rated shirts and pants or arc-rated/flame-resistant coveralls and an arc flash suit.

Double check the arc-rating tag on individual items to make sure they comply with all workplace safety requirements. Properly marked FR clothing will have the ratings clearly stated, as referenced

above. This includes independent classification from UL Laboratories. Simply buying an 'FR Rated' garment is not the same as making sure that it meets the challenges of your work environment.

Staying comfortable on the job

Consider the working conditions of your employees, including the temperature of the job site and what kinds of tasks your employees may need to complete on the job. You also need to supply your employees with the right sizes and styles. If you choose clothing that's uncomfortable, cumbersome, or not the right size, your employees will be less inclined to wear it on the job.

From the weight of the fabric, to the brand of zipper, the details are important in offering overall satisfaction and safety to your workers.

Choose a trusted FR clothing manufacturer

Finally, make sure you purchase clothing from a reputable FR clothing manufacturer. From the weight of the fabric, to the brand of zipper, the details are important in offering overall satisfaction and safety to your workers. Well-made FR garments are as much a tool as they are a uniform. Good quality never goes out of style. **ISHN**

Rick Pedley, PK Safety's President and CEO, joined the family business in 1979. PK Safety, a supplier of occupational safety and personal protective equipment and manufacturer of their own new FR line Grit, has been operating since 1947 and takes OSHA, ANSI, PPE, and CSA work safety equipment seriously. PK Safety's customer service can be reached at 800-829-9580 or online at <https://www.pksafety.com/contact-us/>.