10 Tips for Encouraging use of personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

1. Establish and consistently enforce a policy requiring the use of assigned PPE. Make sure all employees are aware of the rules and the consequences of noncompliance (that is, in addition to the potential for injury or illness).

2. Talk about PPE when appropriate in safety meetings. Identify hazards and explain how specific PPE is designed to protect against those hazards.

3. Ask employees to give their personal reasons for wearing PPE—for example, getting home safe and sound to their families, avoiding disability or disfigurement, because it's the "smart" thing to do, etc.

4. Make the analogy with fitness and healthy lifestyle. Employees do many things like exercising, eating right, and getting medical checkups for their health. Why not wear PPE for their health, too?

5. Ask for employee input concerning PPE. Listen to complaints and reasons for noncompliance.

6. Post signs indicating what PPE is needed in each work area.

7. When you talk about the need for PPE, point out that professional athletes wear PPE. This might appeal to the younger males, who are among the greatest risk-takers in the workplace. Emphasize that they won't see NFL or hockey players on the field or on the ice without their PPE, and those guys certainly aren't wimps. Even pro basketball players wear special footwear, and baseball players wear gloves.

8. Provide statistics and descriptions of accidents that have occurred in your workplace or similar locations because workers weren't wearing required PPE. Some employees will respond to this approach; others may not, thinking it won't happen to them.

9. Make sure supervisors monitor PPE use regularly among all their employees and don't overlook any noncompliance on the part of any employee for any reason.

10. Use progressive discipline on repeat offenders. The carrot is usually better than the stick, but with chronic violators, you've got to be prepared to use the stick.

Set a goal of 100% compliance; nothing should be acceptable.