



Technical Note #108

OSHA Levels - Personal Protective Equipment

When working in a clandestine drug laboratory or a first responder situation, workers need to protect themselves from the hazardous environments surrounding them. The following levels were established by OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) to guide an individual's personal protective equipment (PPE) efforts.

Level A

A Level A environment has the following characteristics:

- Respiratory protection needed: Yes
- Skin contact: Severe acute hazard
- Gas or vapor skin absorption: Severe acute hazard

Users should also employ recommended equipment listed below when in suspected hazardous areas where materials are not identified with certainty.

Recommended Level A Equipment

- Pressure-demand, full facepiece, Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) OR pressure-demand supplied-air respirator with escape SCBA
- Fully encapsulating chemical-resistant suit
- Inner chemical-resistant gloves
- Chemical-resistant safety boots/shoes
- Two-way radio communications
- Hard hat

Level B

A Level B environment has the following characteristics:

- Respiratory protection needed: Yes
- Skin contact: Not acutely toxic
- Gas or vapor skin absorption: Not acutely toxic

Recommended Level B Equipment

- Pressure-demand, full facepiece, Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) OR pressure-demand supplied-air respirator with escape SCBA
- Chemical-resistant clothing (overalls and long-sleeved jacket OR one- or two-piece hooded chemical splash suit OR disposable chemical-resistant one-piece suit)
- Inner and outer chemical-resistant gloves
- Chemical-resistant safety boots/shoes

- Two-way radio communications
- Hard hat

Level C

A Level C environment has the following characteristics:

- Respiratory protection needed: No
- Skin contact: Not acutely toxic
- Gas or vapor skin absorption: Not acutely toxic

Recommended Level C Equipment

- Full facepiece, air-purifying, canister/cartridge-equipped respirator
- Chemical-resistant clothing (overalls and long-sleeved jacket OR one- or two-piece hooded chemical splash suit OR disposable chemical-resistant one-piece suit)
- Inner and outer chemical-resistant gloves
- Chemical-resistant safety boots
- Two-way radio communications
- Hard hat
- Five-minute emergency escape pack

Level D

A Level D environment has the following characteristics:

- Respiratory protection needed: No
- Skin contact: None
- Gas or vapor skin absorption: None

Recommended Level D Equipment

- Coveralls
- Safety boots
- Safety glasses or chemical splash goggles
- Hard hat

Adapted from Drug Enforcement Administration's "Guidelines for Law Enforcement for the Cleanup of Clandestine Drug Laboratories — 2005 Edition", which can be found at the following website:

<http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/resources/redbook.html>