



Regulatory Compliance

Demystifying the Current PPE Standard for High-Visibility Clothing

Julie Sullivan | Jul 21, 2017

What You Need to Know

In the case of high-visibility clothing, ANSI and ISEA revised the standards, merging ANSI/ISEA 107 and ANSI/ISEA 207.

The update brings most high-visibility products under a single classification; it highlights new distinctions for particular garments and regulations for smaller workers.

A noticeable non-transportation and non-roadway trend: ANSI/ISEA 107-2015 is also being applied for workers on the factory floor.

The standard comes on the heels of several other PPE advancements and changes.

Find out what the high-visibility safety apparel standard merger means for your business, along with other recent PPE updates.

The merging of two standards for high-visibility safety apparel into **ANSI/ISEA 107-2015** happened in February 2016 but—like many standards after an update—continues to raise questions for many safety plant chiefs about the expectation for personal protective equipment.

“We are seeing more requests for education and clarification regarding PPE for high-visibility disposable garments,” says Alexander Z. Bradley, a principal investigator for DuPont Protection Solutions in a recent interview with *Safety+Health magazine*. “Our global customer base is facing an ‘alphabet soup’ of national and international standards, as well as end-user requirements.”

107-2015 is the industry-consensus standard for high-visibility safety apparel requirements set by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the U.S. Federal Highway Administration.

Between standards, regulations and best practices sits the safety manager, who must keep abreast of rules and regs, and so works closely with suppliers and product manufacturers to stay up to date on changes and interpretations of regulatory bodies’ guidance.

Questions often arise, such as: What does the standard change mean? How will compliance and regulatory bodies interpret the standard revision? What should we implement right now? How does it

apply to specific industries?

The latest revision is ***the third since 1999***. The International Safety Equipment Association (ISEA) and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) partnered with utility, transportation, safety and testing laboratory stakeholders to combine ANSI/ISEA 107-2010 and ANSI/ISEA 207-2011 and group guidance for HVSA products under a single, defining category.

“Low visibility is one of the most serious dangers on a jobsite,” Richard McNeely, chairman of the ISEA High-Visibility Products Group and market manager of ORAFOL Americas, noted in a 2016 ***ISEA response*** to the standard update. “ISEA’s High-Visibility Products Group members remain committed to ensuring that the updates in the revision serve to meet end-user needs by considering all occupational tasks and hazards and to ensure garments provide visibility of the worker from either side, front or back.”

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What’s Within ANSI/ISEA 107-2015?

Essentially, ANSI/ISEA 107-2015 boils down to a single thing: High-visibility protective gear is, and will continue to, evolve. And while it might seem as though combining the two standards (107 and 207) would lessen the specificity of each, the goal was to unify and strengthen standards for all protective gear.

5 High-Visibility Clothing Standards’ Changes

Based on ISEA’s “Frequently Addressed Topics in High-Visibility Safety Apparel” ***document***, here are the five biggest changes:

1. There are now “types” of high-visibility clothing performance classes.

Garment types can be categorized into three letters:

- Type O = Off-Road
- Type R = Roadway
- Type P = Public Safety

2. The standards now accommodate smaller sizes.

As smaller workers wearing large garments presents a safety hazard, the standard calls for less background material for the smallest sizes in Type R garments.

3. Companies must distinguish between flame-resistant clothing and non-flame-resistant clothing.

Any garments that could easily catch fire must be designated as non-FR. This is a new requirement.

4. Company logos and back design will look a little different.

The front and back of garments must have no less than 40 percent of background material, and logos with non-ANSI-compliant materials can no longer cover more than 22 square inches of reflective material.

5. Current ANSI/ISEA 107-2010 and ANSI-ISEA 207-2011 garments are still acceptable ... for now.

“Actual lifetimes in the field will depend on exposure and care and could range from weeks to years,” notes Dionne Murray Lemer, a senior product manager for National Safety Apparel, in a **webinar presentation** about Appendix F of ANSI/ISEA 107-2015.

The standard, while not requiring immediate replacement of garments, does suggest one more area where you can expect things to evolve: the life expectancy of HVSA garments. Garments worn daily may need to be replaced every six months; those not worn daily may need to be replaced every three years.

Other PPE Trends to Watch For

Increasingly, ANSI/ISEA 107-2015 is expanding to include not just PPE for associates in transportation or roadside work, such as first responders, construction or parking attendants.

“I have seen a trend of increased use of high-visibility clothing inside the factory. ... While a safety vest is often the first garment considered, safety professionals may also consider garments that integrate high-visibility materials into work uniforms, such as high-visibility T-shirts and rental laundry work shirts,” says Shari Franklin Smith, a senior technical service specialist for 3M’s personal safety division. “These garments can help reduce entanglement issues sometimes experienced with vests. While an ANSI/ISEA 107 Type R, Class 2 is the most commonly observed, safety professionals may also consider garments meeting the new ANSI/ISEA 107-2015, Type O for off-road use.”

Aside from the ANSI/ISEA 107-2015 update to high-visibility protective gear, manufacturers also continue to evolve HVSA products as well.

In an interview with **Safety+Health magazine**, Norman Keane, a glove program manager for D30 in the U.K., notes that job specificity, individualization and user comfort have become increasingly critical factors in PPE products.

“The most important factor is still choosing the right PPE for the job,” he says. “Those designing, producing and purchasing PPE need to understand employees’ needs in terms of comfort and well-being, but also the demands of the job and the degree and nature of the hazards faced. One size does not fit all, and worker engagement and involvement during product development is critical.”

Aside from protective gear itself, safety chiefs also have begun asking about testing methods.

“We continue to receive questions about the appropriate test methods and performance standards for specific end-use applications,” Rodney Taylor, a sales and marketing manager for industrial PPE at D30, relates in **Safety+Health magazine**. “The lack of a standards infrastructure in North America for hand impact and antivibration applications continues to pose challenges for safety and health professionals with the responsibility for selecting” PPE.

How do you see the world of PPE evolving in the coming years? Share your thoughts below.