

THE INDUSTRIAL ATHLETE DIGEST

Weekly Wellness & Safety Tips from Work Right NW



RETHINKING 'SHRINK IT AND PINK IT'

BY MIRANDA ZAMORA-WILLIAMS, MS, ATC

Did you know that a [recent survey](#) showed 84% of women have a hard time finding properly fitting personal protective equipment (PPE)? That may be because women only [make up](#) 30% of manufacturing and 10.9% of construction workforces. In these industries PPE is often designed to fit a typical male body and historically the strategy for women's PPE follows the "[shrink it and pink it](#)" approach instead of a female-specific design.

XY VS XX

Here are a few general differences between men and women to consider for PPE designed for women.

- **Gloves:** Women typically have smaller wrists, hands, and fingers
- **Safety Vests and Fall Harnesses:** Women typically have smaller shoulders, shorter torsos, and wider hips
- **Safety glasses:** Women may have a more narrow face, nose, or smaller head size
- **Boots:** Women typically have a smaller and more narrow feet

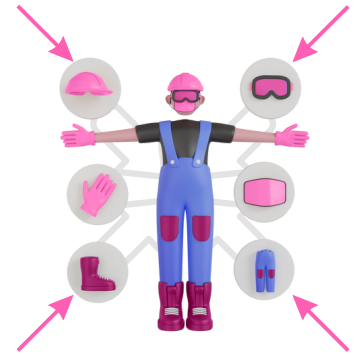
SMALLER ISN'T A FIX

With these differences the old rule of "one size smaller" where women are encouraged to use male-styled PPE in a smaller size doesn't cut it. The anatomy, size, and shape of men and women are different and PPE should follow suit or it may pose a safety risk. Consider the hazards of wearing ill-fitting PPE:

- Loose fitting or long vests can be caught in equipment.
- Clothing or PPE that is too restrictive may decrease mobility, affect ergonomics, or cause chafing or blisters.
- Undergarments such as bras are unlikely to be fire resistant or be appropriate for arc flash protection.
- Loose safety glasses or goggles and face masks may expose the employee to chemical hazards.
- Gloves that are too big may decrease safe handling of tools or materials. Gloves that are too long can be caught in machinery.
- Boots that are too big can cause trips, falls, or ankle and foot injuries. Conversely, boots that are too small may cause blisters or toenail injuries.



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INCREASING PRESENCE INCREASING SAFETY

Progressively, wearable technologies are enhancing safety for women in the industrial sector. These innovations provide insights into ergonomics, range of motion, and balance due to PPE. Carhartt, for instance, incorporates movement considerations into their [women's workwear design](#), while sweat-wicking materials originally designed for athletics are making their way into industrial attire to boost comfort and hygiene. During the pandemic, updated face shields and masks tailored for women in healthcare have spurred better-fitting PPE across industries.

Xena Workwear offers [boots specifically tailored](#) for women's feet. As more companies prioritize appropriate and comfortable PPE for women, finding suitable options becomes somewhat easier, though still relatively uncommon. To access PPE and clothing suitable for female industrial athletes, you can refer to the list provided by the [Electronic Library of Construction Occupational Safety and Health](#).



Miranda Zamora-Williams, MS, ATC || Miranda received a B.S. in Athletic Training from the University of New Mexico and a M.S. in Kinesiology and Health from the University of Wyoming and is currently pursuing her doctorate in Athletic Training at A.T. Still University. Her professional interests include heat illness, rehab, and wildland firefighter health.

Work Right NW is changing the way that companies view workplace hazards. Our focus is on educating the workforce to prevent injury. We provide access to Injury Prevention Specialists in the workplace to address the early signs of discomfort. We are changing the industry one company at a time by helping one person at a time.

