

Diversified technology company 3M is launching the first of an innovative series of 'safety spotlights' through which it will use its expertise and knowledge to assist companies in dealing with a range of common, yet sometimes complicated, workplace safety issues.

The first spotlight will be on compatibility - the ability of several Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) products to be worn together in a way where no one item compromises the ability of another to protect the wearer.

Jo Partridge of 3M's Occupational Health & Environmental Safety Division explained: "Many industries and activities, including construction, food and beverage manufacture, paint spraying and welding to name but a few, present multiple hazards to workers, meaning more than one PPE type may need to be worn simultaneously on the worker's head or face.. This could lead to compatibility issues.

"There are several ways to approach the issue of compatibility. One option is to use combination products which bring together several PPE types in a single unit – for example a powered air respirator with a headtop which incorporates hearing, eye, head and respiratory protection. This system reduces the number of items, and associated fitting components, competing for space on a wearer's face.

"Another option is to involve wearers in the PPE selection process and to individually assess the fit of the different PPE components. This could involve checking that protective eyewear is not interfering with a respirator's face seal, or that a hard hat isn't impacting on the fit of hearing protection. PPE which is not fitting properly will offer significantly reduced or even zero protection – increasing health risks to workers."

The importance of compatibility is such that it is recognised by the law - both the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations and the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations state that any item of PPE must be compatible with other PPE worn.

A free webinar to be held by 3M on **Tuesday 22 March** at **12 noon** will discuss the importance of compatibility in ensuring worker safety and legal compliance, and how this can be achieved; whilst an in-depth technical bulletin will further discuss the issue.