



5 GLOBAL TRENDS

IN PPE-CLOTHING
FOR THE INDUSTRIAL
SAFETY INDUSTRY

GLOBAL TREND REPORT | 2022
BASED ON EU-NORMS



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INTRODUCTION

What are the major trends when it comes to protective clothing today within Industrial Safety?

As a Health & Safety professional, you play a crucial role when it comes to developing a high-quality safety culture and protecting your professionals.

Being up-to-speed with the most important trends in the protective clothing industry is necessary to meet the needs of your employees and to stand out from your competition.

With this trend report, we'll ensure you don't miss out on the latest exciting opportunities when it comes to selecting your future protective workwear.

This report is carefully compiled by product management and end user marketing management of our global Industrial Safety segment.



Access here the
US-version

Because PPE-clothing are based on norms/standards related to Europe or America, this Global Industrial Safety trend report is also available based on US-Standards. [**Click here to access the US-version.**](#)

TREND #1

HIGHER ENGAGEMENT WITH EMPLOYEES TO BOOST A STRONG SAFETY CULTURE

It's common for companies to get caught up in the selection process for PPE-clothing and forget to consult the most important stakeholders: the wearers!

Health & Safety Managers across the globe are becoming increasingly focused on **getting the wearers buy-in** at all stages of the process. Where previously the focus may have been more on working out the tech specs and purchase process of the protective garments, there's now a growing realisation that the more the wearers are involved, the more likely they are to contribute to a **zero injury safety culture** at your company.

Indeed, employee involvement is the secret to the best protective clothing and safety. It all comes down to whether your employees feel like their opinions are valued.

Engaged employees are more likely to wear their protective clothing confidently and perform their job safely — which is a win-win for you, your company, and of course, your employees themselves.

How to get from engaged employees to concrete solutions?

How do you translate your wearers input into a final product? It can be a struggle to understand what your options are when it's time to draft the specifications for new protective clothing. Here are 4 steps to get you started:

Discovering the “why” behind safety

“

There are only two ways to influence human behaviour: you can manipulate it or you can inspire it.”

Simon Sinek

5 STEPS HOW TO GET FROM ENGAGED EMPLOYEES TO CONCRETE SOLUTIONS:

STEP 1

Perform a risk assessment

Starting with a [risk assessment](#) of the hazards in your work environment is a must, so that you can identify the specific safety standards that apply to you. Once you're aware of the norms you need to comply with, you'll be one step closer to choosing the best solution for your situation.

STEP 2

Explore the safety norms

Even when fully complying with industry safety norms, you'll often have different solutions to choose from within the norm. There are many different types of [FR protective fabrics](#), for instance, just as there are many [multi-risk protective fabrics](#) with multiple applications. With so many options available, how can you be confident that you're making the most informed choice? A protective fabrics supplier can offer you [independent advice](#) on which solutions in the market perfectly match your specific needs.

STEP 3

Listen better and ask for wearer feedback

It's not uncommon to hear employees say *"This is the first time I've ever been asked to give my opinion"* whilst collecting feedback on how wearers experience their protective clothing. As a Health & Safety Manager, it's your job to listen to, focus on, and act on behalf of your workers — they're the ones who wear the protective clothing every day. Give your employees the platform to speak up about their experience,

their comfort, and their insights on how to improve your protective clothing, and take this input forward to improve your next protective clothing solution.

STEP 4

Compare and test your fabric options

Besides performing a third-party audit on your current solution and giving you the information you need to make a data-driven choice, a protective fabrics supplier can also help you [compare your top options](#) side-by-side and test them for performance.

STEP 5

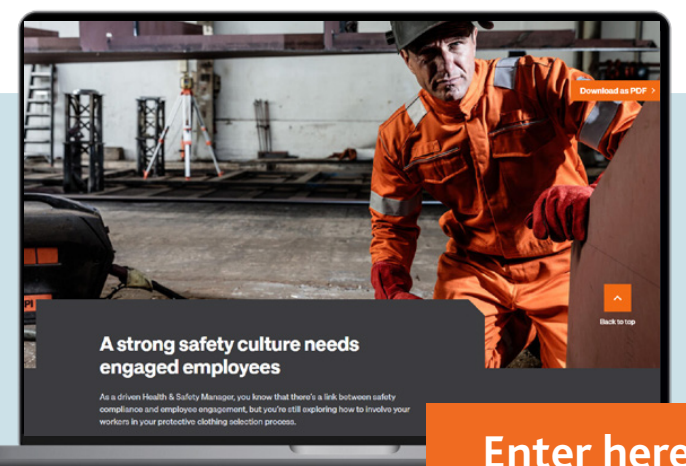
Pay attention to garment design

The more specific you're able to be during your selection process, the more protected, comfortable and satisfied your employees will be with their new protective workwear. To go the extra mile and give your employees well-fitted clothing they'll want to wear day in and day out, don't forget to [bring garment design into the picture](#). Custom designs that take fit and feel into account will always be the most comfortable, and thus keep the wearer compliant.

Voice of the Wearer

This comprehensive page [Voice of the wearer](#) provides you with all the relevant steps on how to involve workers in your selection process.

On this page you'll learn how to inspire safer behaviour on the workforce, how to get better buy-in from your stakeholders, how to involve workers, how to shift



Wearer feedback

“

This is the first time we've conducted such a large wear trial and collected all this subjective data to help us make the right choice. The choice is no longer based on paper, but on real-life wearer feedback.”

Worker at global chemical company

TREND #2

CHANGED APPROACH IN SELECTION PROCESS OF PPE-CLOTHING

Globally, there is a growing recognition that maintaining the status quo will not fly when it comes to the selection process for PPE-clothing. For instance, in some shipyards, FR-clothing is still not being worn — with the underlying attitude being that no injury has occurred over the past twenty-five years, [so why change](#) the way things are done now? However, we should never wait for the worst case scenario to take place before implementing high-quality PPE solutions.

Thankfully, there are a number of elements contributing to a changed approach in the selection process of PPE-clothing, making it easier for you to select the right solutions for your workplace.

1. Wear trials

Firstly, as previously mentioned, the interest and opinions of the wearer are becoming more important. It is becoming more common, in the US and Europe for example, to [carry out wear trials](#). Wearing it is believing it, and the wearer is best placed to feed into final decisions around what fabrics do and don't work for them.

2. Digitalisation

Secondly, digitalisation is becoming more integrated in our industry, providing helpful tools for HSE managers to make more informed choices. In Europe, Proclaud® — the Protective Clothing Audit — has become a common tool [to help HSE managers audit their workplace](#) and better understand the needs and wants of their employees. The industry has also adopted

tools such as the Life Cycle Analysis and Environmental Product Declaration (EPD®), which are designed to profile the durability and sustainability of garments. Inspired by the growing digitalisation in the protective clothing industry in EU, in the US there has been a shift [towards online fabric selectors](#) — again, simplifying what was once a much more complex selection process.

3. Transparency

Furthermore, we see a change taking place when it comes to transparency. This applies to [transparency of communications, trust and pricing structures](#) across the value chain. [Hyperinflation, Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine](#) have presented our industry with a range of challenges, such as a massive rise in cost for energy — a particularly difficult predicament given that the textiles industry is known for being energy-intensive. Distributors and suppliers have responded accordingly by communicating more frequently with their customers, allowing information around pricing changes, timelines and other related issues to filter through the value chain much more quickly and keep everyone up-to-date.

4. Risk Assessments

Every company that makes use of FR-clothing must do a risk assessment — that's a given. However, these [risk assessments are now becoming more robust](#) and incorporating more involvement from the wearer. And they are taking place not only in factories, but in other workplaces too, such as offices. Employers have an obligation to ensure that their employees work in the best possible safety conditions, whether in offices or workshops. To do this, they must put in place collective and/or individual protection following the recommendations of the risk analysis they will have previously carried out.

AT A GLANCE: 7 STEPS TOWARDS YOUR PROTECTIVE CLOTHING RISK ASSESSMENT



Follow these 7 steps to form the road map for your risk assessment:

- 1 Identify your potential risks
- 2 Analyse and categorise your risks
- 3 Review your current solution
- 4 Know your protective clothing requirements
- 5 Go beyond safety compliance
- 6 Prepare the introduction of your new protective clothing to your workers
- 7 Review your protective clothing solution frequently

Want to ensure you feel confident approaching your next risk assessment? Keep reading to [dive into each of these 7 steps with this blog](#).

TREND #3

MORE THAN JUST COMFORT: FASHION AND FIT



As time has passed, comfort has started to move away from becoming a luxury, and more towards becoming a standard. Fabric manufacturers and garment makers are placing a greater focus on incorporating fashion and fit into their garments in order to develop the next level of comfort.

Furthermore, more companies want PPE-clothing to become part of their corporate image. What we're now seeing is a blurring of the lines between casual wear and protective wear. In this way, employees are offered clothing they are proud to wear, while at the same time, their company's branding becomes much more integrated.

So what does this mean in practical terms for PPE-clothing? Here's what we're seeing:

Garments that move with you

There has been a concerted global effort to work with garment partners on stretch, giving the wearer an innovative new garment that moves with them. Inspiration is being taken from other industries, such as athletic and outdoor apparel, to create garments which have greater stretch capability while still maintaining integrity and durability.

Garments as an extension of the wearer

Garments as the extension of the wearer: this is what leads to a successful garment that employees will be proud to wear, both during and after work. **Protection and comfort** have now become a given. What takes garments to the next level is improving their aesthetic quality, so that

employees will be happy to wear their garments both on and off the job. We are seeing garments become more fitted, lighter, and more breathable — essentially, being elevated from just being practical to being fashionable, too.

Manufacturers have risen to the feedback of end users, too. For instance, over ten years ago TenCate Protective Fabrics introduced their satin line. This was in response to feedback that the previous fabrics used in protective wear 100% cotton, heavyweight and too stiff. So, TenCate Protective Fabrics **introduced the satin line** to the market. The satin weave allowed for enhanced comfort and became the market standard.

Garments that rise to every occasion

Examples like the satin line mentioned before have shown that when we are willing to challenge the status quo, great positive change can take place. Willingness to innovate ensures that protective garments work for every situation. The next major steps are the integration of knitwear and stretch into protective clothing. Both of these offer fashionable, casual and comfortable options for workers in various environments.

All of these shifts ultimately combine together to meet the needs of the wearer whilst also **improving safety culture**.



“

A unique outside-in perspective informs everything we do. For us, it's not just about developing the best products. It's about looking several steps further, first to our customers and the end users who rely on our products to excel at what they do, then to the broader environment we all have in common: Earth. Because protective fabrics should protect the planet, too.”

Marcel Willems, VP of Global
Industrial Safety
TenCate Protective Fabrics

TREND #4

SUSTAINABILITY IS TOP OF MIND

There's no doubt that in today's climate, high priority **must be placed on sustainability**. Indeed, it is estimated that the average European throws away around 11kg of textiles every year. Globally, textile production almost doubled between 2000 to 2015, and the consumption of clothing and footwear is expected to increase by 63% to 2030.

In the face of statistics like these, we have observed a shift when it comes to the values of different members of the textiles value chain regarding sustainability.

Wearers are much more environmentally conscious, and as such demand transparency when it comes to the sustainable impact of their garments.

HSE Managers & Sustainability managers want to comply with corporate sustainability goals.

Garment manufacturers and distributors want to meet the demand for higher sustainable solutions, from garment design and the use of recycled material to packaging and local supply.

Fabric manufacturers are developing sustainable solutions with added benefits for the wearer, so that sustainability can go hand-in-hand with added value.

Fibre suppliers are constantly engaged in the development of sustainable and circular fibres.

In Europe, the [EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles](#) has led to a raft of measures aimed at extending the lifecycle of textiles. Setting mandatory minimums for the inclusion of recycled fibres in textiles, for instance, has led to the development of a range of [sustainable fibres](#) and [sustainable fabrics](#) on the market.

The strategy also calls for clearer information on textiles and a Digital Product Passport based on mandatory information requirements on circularity and other key environmental aspects. In practice, we can already see that standard reporting — through the form of CSR reports — is becoming more and more commonplace. This keeps us accountable when it comes to our sustainability goals, provides transparency, and helps us continue to plan for, and work towards, a more sustainable future.

To find out more about growing demand sustainable practice in the textiles industry, why not have a read of our [Infrabel case study](#), and our recent blog centred around [design for the environment](#).

Case Study

Infrabel boosts positive impact with sustainable workwear

Read how railway infrastructure manager Infrabel translated its corporate sustainability strategy into sustainable workwear.



Read here



Picture: Infrabel - Benjamin Brolet

TREND #5

PROTECTION IS A GIVEN (DEPENDING ON WHERE YOU ARE ON THE WORLD)

It might seem strange to not talk about protection in the PPE-clothing industry anymore. But protection is becoming more of a given, or the minimum, in regions such as Europe and North America. In these regions, norms are being applied to a very high standard, and safety on the workfloor is being monitored effectively.

More often now, FR clothing is becoming the standard, whereas previously industrial workers were fitted with non-FR solutions. This is not (yet) the case in all countries worldwide though. In some countries, industrial workers in utilities for example are still wearing non-FR garments and safety awareness is in its initial stage.

Linking back to earlier trends, it's clear that nowadays, protection is the bare minimum when it comes to protective garments. This must be integrated with comfort — so that the wearer can work with ease — and sustainability — so that the wearer can take pride in how their garment has been produced.



THE DELICATE INTERPLAY BETWEEN SPECIFIC AND GENERIC GLOBAL TRENDS

The world around us is developing at a rapid pace, and these changes have a great impact on how we operate our businesses. Four major generic global trends — the global climate crisis, trust & transparency, health & safety and digitalisation — affect the global protective clothing industry, and are in line with the trends in this Industrial Safety trend report.

We must continuously assess external factors in the world around us in order to empower our Industrial Safety value chain to be instrumental in creating better solutions. **Have a read of this blog** to learn more about how global trends affect the protective clothing industry.

TRANSFORM YOUR SAFETY CULTURE

MASTER YOUR ROLE, BUILD YOUR PROTECTIVE WORKWEAR KNOWLEDGE AND TRANSFORM YOUR SAFETY CULTURE

Ready to boost your knowledge on everything protective workwear? Discover the latest insights from in-house experts in our blogs, trend reports, case studies and whitepapers **on our website**, or **sign up here for our monthly insights update** for the Industrial Safety industry.

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