

BIR position statement on the selection and purchase of lead aprons



clarification on current and future legislation

Due to changes in International Standards for personal protective equipment (PPE), it has become unclear whether current lead apron designs meet the new standards and whether they can continue to be purchased. This position statement seeks to clarify the present situation.

What's going on with PPE?

There are two components:

There is a new standard for defining lead equivalence [BS 2014], which replaced the previous standard [BS 1999] in June 2017. However, these IEC standards have no force, per se, in law.

The standards need to be adopted into regulation. Current UK law in this area [SI 2002] requires that PPE is CE marked. A new EU Regulation on PPE was issued in 2016 [EU 2016] which specified that CE marking must be in accordance with BS 2014, and will apply from April 2018. However, it also allowed a further transition year (to April 2019) for PPE manufactured and tested to the previous EC Directive [EC 1989].

So what can I buy?

We are in a transition period between the two standards and so aprons can be purchased with certification (CE marking) under either the old or new BS standard until April 2019, when only the BS 2014 standard will apply. It is understood that new CE garment labelling will indicate which testing standard was applied.

Why would you buy "old" standard aprons?

The weight of aprons is likely to increase under the new Standard. So it may be an advantage both weight-wise and cost-wise to buy old or current products, while they can be sold and are allowed. However, aprons that comply with the new standard [BS 2014] will have been tested over a range of X-ray energies which more closely match the scattered radiation encountered in clinical practice than the old standard. Also, most existing part-lead or lead-free aprons would give less than the specified protection (e.g. 0.25 mm Pb) under the new standard. When selecting and purchasing PPE, you should consider consulting a Radiation Protection Adviser [HSE 2000].

If I have bought the old aprons or am considering buying them now, what happens when the new standard is introduced?

There will be no requirement for you to replace aprons in April 2019. You may use your current aprons until such time as they need replacing due to wear and tear. At such time you will be required to purchase new aprons complying with the new BS standard.

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