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Category I – low risk

Protection against minimal risks, the effects of which can be recognised by the user in good time.

Typical examples:

- ▶ Gloves for light cleaning work
- ▶ Protection against superficial mechanical impact
- ▶ Protection against non-aggressive cleaning agents

Testing & marking:

- ▶ CE marking
- ▶ Manufacturer declares conformity under their own responsibility

Note for companies: Suitable for simple tasks – not for safety-critical work areas.

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Category II – medium risk

Protection against risks, that are neither minor nor life-threatening.

Typical examples:

- ▶ Safety goggles
- ▶ Hearing protection
- ▶ Safety shoes
- ▶ Gloves against mechanical risks

Testing & marking:

- ▶ CE marking
- ▶ Type-examination by an independent testing body

Note for companies: Standard category for many industrial and trade applications. Standards and Check the area of application carefully.

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Category III – high risk

Protection against life-threatening hazards or irreversible damage to health.

Typical examples:

- ▶ Respirators against hazardous substances
- ▶ Chemical protective suits
- ▶ Fall protection

Testing & marking:

- ▶ CE marking
- ▶ Type-examination + ongoing monitoring by a Notified Body
- ▶ Identification number of the testing body next to the CE mark

Note for companies: Strict selection, documentation and regular instruction mandatory required.



Objective:

Quick orientation when selecting personal protective equipment (PPE). The guide supports purchasers, safety officers and sales staff in correctly classifying safety-critical products – practical, compact and EU-compliant.

Why the PPE category is crucial

The classification of PPE into categories I, II and III is based on the level of risk to be protected against. It determines:

- ▶ which test procedures are required,
- ▶ whether external testing bodies need to be involved,
- ▶ and what responsibility companies bear in selection and use.

The legal basis is the **PPE Regulation (EU) 2016/425**.

Comparison table: PPE categories at a glance

Category Risk level Examples	Testing effort	Suitable for
I Low – cleaning & household gloves	Manufacturer's declaration	Simple tasks
II Medium – safety goggles, hearing protection	Type-examination	Industry, trades
III High – respiratory protection, Chemical protection	External monitoring	Hazardous work areas



What companies need to consider

- ▶ PSA **always based on the actual hazard** select
- ▶ Only use Category III products with complete documentation
- ▶ Employees regularly **instruct and train**
- ▶ Document PPE use and inspection intervals



Conclusion:

The correct PPE category ensures safety, legal compliance and clarity when purchasing. Those who correctly classify risks protect employees in a targeted manner and avoid wrong decisions regarding safety-critical products.

Tip: Use the PPE category as the first selection criterion – only then follow comfort, material and design.