



Consider Cost vs. Price When Purchasing Hand Protection Products

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Everyone wants a bargain, especially in tough economic times. However, purchasing managers and others should take heed when buying personal protective equipment (PPE), including gloves, because sometimes an inexpensive product will actually cost more over time.

Product costs include a variety of factors such as purchase price, the expense of keeping the product functional through laundering and care, service life and the product's ability to protect against injuries, which impacts medical and indemnity costs. Whether the product can enhance worker productivity and performance should be considered as part of the equation.

If it seems too good to be true...

The old adage “you get what you pay for” often applies to hand protection products. If the price of gloves seems too good to be true, the product probably will not provide the protection and performance required. Even though the purchase price is less, the product may actually cost more in the long run.

An automotive plant, for example, evaluated a new cut resistant glove that cost \$3 per pair vs. the \$1.50 per pair gloves workers were already wearing. At the time, the plant was purchasing 36,000 pairs of the \$1.50 gloves each year, with an annual glove spend of \$54,000.

When the new \$3 glove was tested, management discovered the product lasted three times as long as the \$1.50 glove while providing workers a higher level of cut protection. Supplying workers the \$3 gloves would decrease usage to 12,000 pairs per year, with an annual glove spend of \$36,000.

Using the more expensive glove enabled the plant to save \$18,000 each year without even considering the possibility of laundering, which could further extend the product's life. Even though the new gloves cost twice as much initially, the plant reduced its glove spend overall.

Analyzing price

If the price of a hand protection product seems suspiciously inexpensive, buyers should ask *why* the product is cheaper than competitive products. Here are some points to consider.

Safety and protection – Will the product properly protect employees from the specific hazards they face as part of their everyday jobs—whether they are at risk for lacerations, chemical exposures, burns, etc. Workers who wear gloves that do not protect against specific hazards open themselves to the risk of injury—and expose the company to related costs. The ongoing threat of injury negatively impacts employee performance and morale.

Cost performance – How much will the product truly cost in the long term? The above example shows how a seemingly more expensive glove can actually result in significant savings because its service life is longer.

Productivity – Will the hand protection product help workers perform their jobs more efficiently? Workers often need a certain level of dexterity and/or tactile sensitivity for specific tasks.

Injury prevention – Will the gloves significantly reduce the risk of worker injuries? Injuries and lost productivity resulting from missed time or a worker’s limited capability typically cost significantly more than a higher priced glove.

As an example, a manufacturing facility was paying \$535,000 for hand injuries each year, with its glove spend at \$30,000. The facility supplied workers a hand protection product that provided a much higher level of protection. The glove, which was more expensive, increased the facility’s glove spend to \$375,000 per year.

Over a period of time, workers had no recordable hand injuries, which saved the company the \$535,000 it previously paid for hand injuries and related expenses. Subtracting the company’s glove spend (\$375,000) meant the facility saved approximately \$160,000 each year.

Standardization/SKU reduction – Will the product allow you to reduce the number of styles workers are using across your facility? Standardizing helps assure workers are wearing the best product for similar jobs, can simplify safety training and may eliminate redundant or duplicate products while decreasing the time required to order and stock these products. A smaller inventory also reduces storage requirements, carrying costs and taxes.

Supply chain – Will the manufacturer or distributor be able to replenish the hand protection product based on your company’s needs? Having a ready supply of product—without back orders—saves time because the product is available and workers know how to use it. The search process begins again if the styles you are using are not available or are discontinued.

Controls – Can the product be laundered and can it be dispensed to control worker usage? These two points are critical – perhaps the most important of all.

The importance of control

Companies do have the ability to control—and potentially decrease—their glove costs by laundering and managing access to products. With many companies focusing on how they can go “green,” glove laundering is becoming more popular than ever.

Laundering has the potential to extend a product’s service life and costs far less than replacing gloves after each use. Most non-disposable gloves may be laundered two or more times as long as they are not damaged from use.

An aluminum processing company, for example, found it could launder gloves twice while still providing workers with a high level of cut protection, which significantly reduced its glove costs. Many laundering facilities also offer repair services for apparel with small holes or tears. And,

many companies have noted that when a laundry program is working efficiently, as laundry volume increases, the investment in new hand protection products decreases.

Companies should also consider control options, which can extend product longevity. Too often, workers wear gloves once or twice and dispose of them even though the product has not reached the end of its service life. Installing vending machines and providing workers with access cards or requiring them to obtain products from a locked cabinet will prevent workers from disposing of gloves prematurely.

Summary

Most companies want workers to wear the proper hand protection products, but some do not want to make the extra effort to control glove use. As a result, managers tend to focus on what they feel they can control: price.

The cost of hand protection products, however, is not limited to purchase price but includes how much the product enhances worker productivity and performance and the extent to which it reduces worker injuries and related expenses.

Companies can control glove costs by initiating laundering programs to extend product life and prevent premature disposal. They also have the option of putting controls in place that assure workers wear the right product to the end of its serviceable life.

For further details about how to reduce hand protection costs, or for information about Ansell products and services, call 800.800.0444 or visit www.ansellpro.com.