

High-Performance Work Wear for Women

A conversation with Jane Henry, founder and CEO of **SeeHerWork**

By Donna Campbell



Jane Henry

The scars on my hands tell stories from construction projects worked during the summer months of my youth. Why? I didn't have gloves that fit my small hands. When the time came for a firm grip on a framing section or to screed ready-mix concrete for an industrial floor, I threw off the gloves. I didn't want to concede to my male counterparts that I couldn't do the job. For the record, I couldn't afford Band-aids. I settled for a wad of gauze and duct tape. Thank goodness those days are behind me.

Fast-forward to today, and I'm in an office focusing on article content for the construction industry—no need for gloves. But what about the increasing number of women working on construction jobsites? Do they have gloves that fit? Are women trying to find a men's size that works? Who makes clothes and other PPE for women?

A HERO AMONG US

In late June, I had the honor of speaking with a lady with a passion for well-designed, well-fitting clothes for women in construction—Jane Henry. She shared her story of living in Houston, Texas, during Hurricane Harvey and dealing with the cleanup effort of her flooded home. She had a frustrating time finding work gear—and what she found didn't fit well.

"Maintaining a grip with the extra inch of material at the tips of my unisex small gloves, while using an angle grinder, swinging a sledgehammer, and hauling debris, was difficult," says Henry. "The extra force and frequency required to manage around my ill-fitting PPE made each day exhausting."

That event sparked Henry's recognized need for women's apparel in the construction industry and she made her "ah-ha" moment a reality.

RESEARCH CONFIRMS NEED

During our conversation, Henry stated her findings regarding clothing and equipment for tradeswomen.

"I unearthed a 1999 National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) report and a 2016 Mt. Sinai Selikoff Centers for Occupational Health Study stating that there is no standard test for Fit Compliance, and PPE is not designed for women," notes Henry. "In my continued research, I learned the American National Standards Institute

(ANSI) sets 'expectations' for fit, yet there are no required ANSI tests to ensure compliance. And, according to a 2017 report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 150 women per year lose their lives to work activities that can be prevented through properly fitting personal protective clothing and equipment."

Henry conducted more than 50 focus groups with women in the construction industry and the response was eerily the same. "We are tired of this Pink-it and Shrink-it; we need stuff that works." According to Henry, the women went on to tell stories about duct taping their coveralls and pants given the extra material. They even spoke about completely ditching the PPE because they needed to get the job done and the extra effort needed to make it work was not worth the harassment from their peers for not performing at the same level.

It was at this point in the conversation that I shared my love for duct tape and Jane shared her upcoming online business selling clothing and PPE designed for women. Her site launched in September.



DebrisProtect Bra



Impact Gloves

FIT MATTERS

SeeHerWork.com sells workwear, safety equipment, and other job-specific products. The line includes just about everything an industrial woman would need including eye protection, tool belts, and gloves that fit the female hand. Clothing options include the basics to high visibility, with vibrant colors and reflective materials. Products are lightweight with moisture absorption and can be layered for shifting climate conditions. Check out the website and shop the products.

Welcome to the jobsite, Jane! ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION

SeeHerWork designs, manufactures, and sells workwear, safety equipment, and other job-specific products to keep women in civil, commercial, and industrial careers safe and aid them in performing at their highest level. For more information, or to order PPE for the female form, visit www.seeherwork.com.