



Hard Hats

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There really isn't any excuse for not wearing a hard hat on jobs that require one. The miracles of chemistry and manufacturing have turned out head protection to fit every need and about every taste. The colors are attractive and have proved to be positive factors in morale and in comfort. In some cases the type of job a crew performs is identified by the color of its hard hats. This type of team identification and protection is also used by football teams, pilots in Air Force units, and other programs. The color of a hard hat is also a factor in repelling the heat of the sun.

The concept of head protection isn't anything that arrived on the scene recently. The armies of ancient times learned that head protection was a must for their job. So later on, head protection was used mainly by the military, while other occupants ignored it. This was probably due to the fact that the head protection available was cumbersome and expensive. But these objectionable features have been removed from today's hard hats.

Hard hats should be worn on all jobs where hazards exist from falling or flying objects, harmful contracts, or exposure to electrical shock. That includes a lot of jobs.

There are many ways head injuries can occur:

- ⊗ objects falling on person working with stacks of materials
- ⊗ falling tools
- ⊗ falling tree limbs
- ⊗ objects hanging from or dropping from overhead cranes.

The list could be much longer, and you can probably add to it yourselves.

Recently, the newspapers carried a story about a hard hat saving the life of a young man on a sewer construction project. He was caught in a cave-in. As the dirt closed in around him, his hard hat slipped over his face and the air that was trapped in the hat kept him alive until he could be uncovered by rescuers. So the security offered by protective equipment is often broader than you may realize.

Like all things that your well-being depends upon, hard hats should be treated with care. If they are damaged or the suspension cushion doesn't fit well, they should be replaced. They should be kept clean, and, if a hard hat is assigned to someone after having been used by another employee, it should be sanitized.

Never paint a hard hat unless authorized to do so, and only after the manufacturer has been contacted to determine if the paint will soften the shell material or cause other damage.

Hard hats, or protective helmets as they are technically referred to, are of four types—classes **A, B, C, and D**. Each of these classes must meet certain requirements for withstanding voltage and impact. There is no single hard hat which necessarily fills the protection requirements of all types of jobs. So, naturally, it is important to follow safety rules and always wear the type of hard hat specified and issued for your particular job.

Chin straps and winter liners are used with some hard hats. They shouldn't contain metallic parts or conductive materials if used on high voltage protection hard hats. Likewise, if liners or straps are used on jobs where there is danger of ignition from heat, flame or chemical reaction, they should be made of non-burning materials.

An injury report never makes pleasant reading. But it's particularly disturbing to read that the injured person had been instructed to wear a hard hat and didn't.

So, a hard hat not only gives protection, but it's a symbol too. It shows that the guy who is wearing it has brains and that he wants to keep them.

Disclaimer: Information contained in this handout is considered to be correct. If there are questions, please contact the Arkansas Workers' Compensation Commission/Health and Safety Division.