

Tool Box Talk

HEAD PROTECTION

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Head Protection at Work

In construction, a hard hat is a critical piece of personal protection. It is the last line of defence against objects impacting one of your most vital assets - your head. If your hard hat is not in good condition or used properly, the consequences could be tragic.

Type of Head Protection

If there is a foreseeable danger of injury to a worker's head at a worksite, the employer must ensure that the worker wears head protection that complies with the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) standards.

Most head protection is made up of two parts:

- The shell (light and rigid to deflect blows)
- The suspension (to absorb and distribute the energy of the blow)

Both parts of the headwear must be compatible and maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions. If attachments are used with headwear, such as earmuffs or face shields, they must be designed specifically for use with the headwear used.

Inspection & Maintenance

Keep your hard hat clean and free of solvents, adhesives, grease, and oil. Leaving a hard hat on a dashboard of a vehicle, where the heat from the sun may be intensified as it passes through the glass, or on top of a heat register, could compromise the strength of the hard hat.

CSA International advises against applying stickers on hard hats for three reasons:

- The adhesive on many stickers may react with plastic and degrade the strength of the shell
- Metallic stickers may pose a special problem. They may conduct radiant heat from the sun creating a "hot spot" which would also weaken the plastic
- Stickers themselves may hide damage such as cracks, or weaknesses in the shell

The usual maintenance for headgear is simply washing with a mild detergent and rinsing thoroughly.



The Do's and Don'ts of Head Protection

Do

- Replace headgear that is pitted, holed, cracked or brittle
- Replace headgear that has been subjected to a blow even though damage cannot be seen
- Remove from service any headgear if its serviceability is in doubt
- Replace headgear and components according to manufacturer's instructions
- Consult regulations or your supplier for information on headgear

Do Not

- Drill, remove peaks, alter the shell or suspension in any way
- Use solvents or paints on the shell as it will break down the integrity of the shell
- Put chin straps over the brims of certain classes of headgear
- Carry anything in the hard hat while wearing the hard hat

When Should a Hard Hat be Replaced?

The effective life of a hard hat varies with the make and model. Each manufacturer is supposed to provide this information on or with each hard hat sold. They advise that once the hard hat has exceeded its effective life, it should be replaced. If the hard hat has been subjected to a heavy blow or has been stressed by being run over or compressed, it must be replaced.



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