



Head Protection Basics

Perhaps you associate hardhats with protection only from falling objects. Hardhats also protect your workers from shock or burns caused by contact with live electric lines, cuts from falling or flying objects & can keep their hair from becoming caught in moving parts. Safety equipment suppliers can help you select the most appropriate type to protect your workers.

Your workers may need hardhats if they are exposed to overhead items that can fall upon them (*e.g. warehouse having items stacked high; tree trimming work, building or repairing ceilings; construction; chemical or metal production*), overhead items that can shock them (*e.g. overhead electrical or communication lines*), hot items, or other hazards that can injure their heads.

Prior to purchasing hardhats, you should do what is practicable to eliminate or minimize the hazard (*e.g. provide overhead protection on bulldozer to stop falling objects from reaching operator; de-energize electric lines before working on or near them*). Hardhats are not invincible; they do not protect against infinite weight or infinite electric current.

Hardhats come in many types.

- Type 1 have full brims that encircle the hats.
- Type 2 have short bills on the fronts.
- Class A hardhats protect against the impact of falling objects & electric shock from contact with low voltage current.
- Class B hardhats protect against the impact of falling objects & electric shock from contact with high voltage current.
- Class C hardhats protect only against the impact of falling objects.

Bump caps protect workers from injury if their heads strike objects (*e.g. overhead pipes*). They do not protect against the impact of falling objects.

When selecting hardhats, you should purchase those that meet American National Standards Institute Standard #ANSI Z89.1-1986. Hardhats meeting this standard will show the manufacturer's name, ANSI Z89.1-1986, & one of the 3 classes described above. You should also consider other protective equipment your workers may

need to wear with hardhats. (*Make sure hardhats do not interfere with goggles, respirators, or ear muffs.*) Some have such items built-in for convenience. You may wish to add sweat bands for hot areas & insulated hoods or caps for cold areas.

You should train your workers in the correct use of hardhats & enforce it. You should wear a hardhat when needed in order to set an example for your workers as well as to protect yourself. Workers should not wear them backwards like baseball caps. They should adjust inside harnesses for a comfortable, proper fit to help hold the hardhats in place. They should wear chinstraps to help hold them in place when working at awkward positions. They should clean hardhats according to the manufacturer's specifications; some cleaning solvents may weaken them. They should not use them as buckets to carry items.