Selecting a Hard Hat

Like other personal protective equipment, hard hats can prevent injuries and save your life. When you wear the right hard hat and wear it correctly, it can protect you from overhead hazards, bump hazards, head injuries from impact, flying or falling objects, and from electrical shocks and burns.

Selecting the right hard hat is very important. There are three classes of hard hats—conductive, electrical, and general:

- Class C (Conductive) hard hats do not provide any protection from electricity.
- Class E (Electrical) hard hats are tested to withstand 20,000 volts of electricity.
- Class G (General) can withstand up to 2,200 volts of electricity.

There are also two types of hard hats:

- Type I hard hats protect against blows to the top of your head only
- Type II hard hats protect you from blows to the top and sides of your head.
- All hard hats must be ANSI approved. Make sure your hard hat will protect you from the hazards you'll face on the jobsite today.

For the hard hat to protect your head, you have to wear it, and wear it properly. If you can, choose a style that you like. The suspension is important for protection and comfort. Adjust the suspension so that it comfortably fits on your head. Be sure it stays in place but that it's not so tight that it feels uncomfortable. If your hard hat isn't reasonably comfortable, you might be tempted to leave it in your truck instead of wearing it. Don't alter, cut, or tamper with the suspension. Don't wear bandanas, hoodies, or baseball hats under your hard hat because they'll interfere with the suspension. When it's hot or cold outside, use sweatbands or liners that are designed to fit inside your hard hat. If you wear a hard hat that has a bill on the front of it, do not wear it backwards.

Care for your hard hat. Wash it occasionally with a mild detergent to remove dirt and grime. Clean the parts of the suspension that rest on your head. Never drill holes in your hard hat or glue attachments to it. Holes and the chemicals in adhesives can weaken the outer shell.

Know when to replace your hard hat. Always inspect your hard hat before putting it on. You should replace your hard hat when the shell shows signs of cracks, chips, dents, holes, discoloration, dullness, or brittleness. Even the smallest crack can make a hard hat useless. If any component of the hard hat is worn or broken, replace the hard hat immediately. Replace it after any significant impact.

Brains and skulls are often impossible to repair so head injuries are often life-altering or fatal. Don’t take chances. Wear your hard hat.

SAFETY REMINDER
You can prevent falling object hazards by using toe boards and mesh on exposed stairways, scaffolds, and elevated work surfaces.