

## Environmental, Health & Safety News

### Personal Protective Equipment - The Hardhat

The first hard hat was invented by a California manufacturer of safety equipment in 1919. E. D. Bullard still makes hard hats today.

Head protection is worn by all types of professionals: NASCAR drivers, National Football League players, National Hockey League players, jockeys, soldiers, and deep sea divers just to name a few. As construction workers and miners we are required to wear head protection too. Ours is called a hard hat.

Why require a hard hat? It protects you from the danger of head injury caused by the impact from falling or flying objects and from electrical shock. All hard hats must meet requirements for impact resistance and/or electrical resistance as set by the American National Standards Institute. Hard hats are tested to withstand the impact of an eight-pound weight dropped five feet. That's about the same as a two-pound wrench or hammer falling twenty feet and landing on your head.

Never drill holes in your hard hat and check your hat daily for cracks, dents or deep scratches. This kind of change or damage could severely reduce its ability to protect you. The suspension system should not be removed except for cleaning. Don't wear your hard hat backwards (except while welding). Bump caps are not appropriate for construction projects; they are not built to provide the protection that a hard hat does.

The average hard hat weighs about 14 ounces. That's less than one pound. The average man's head weight is 14 pounds, so there's an ounce of protection for every pound of head -- provided that the head protection is worn. The brain is the control center of the body. The slightest damage to any part of the brain will cause malfunction of some area of the body. The skull, under normal circumstances, protects the brain, but when there is a possibility of injury from falling or flying objects, additional protection is needed -- that's why you have a hard hat! It provides an additional layer of protection for your brain, which could mean the difference between life and death or serious injury.

OSHA, employers, unions and insurance companies all insist that hard hats be worn to insure workers' safety. Why? Because they work!

As an object falls it picks up speed and force. It may be hard to believe but even an object as small as a washer or bolt can kill you or inflict massive damage to your brain if it strikes your unprotected head. Your hard hat is designed to deflect falling or flying objects and to absorb some of the shock of impact. Additional shock is absorbed by the suspension system, which distributes the force over a larger area of the head and neck. In our line of work falling washers or bolts are not as much of a concern as are falling rocks from conveyors or storage bins.

Some workers complain about the weight of their hard hats and that they are uncomfortable to wear, especially in warm weather. These complaints don't really meet a common sense review of the facts. The average, modern hard hat weighs about 2 pounds less than the helmets worn in World War II, the Korean War & Vietnam. Regarding so-called discomfort from heat -- hard hats provide the head with a cover of shade, and air is able to circulate around the head between the suspension and the outer shell. Hard hats are a very important part of your protective equipment.

STATISTICS OFFER PROOF POSITIVE THAT HARD HATS PREVENT OR LESSEN HEAD INJURIES. BE SMART. Don't take chances - wear your hard hat at all times, it protects your head which in turn protects your brain. Keep your hat clean and replace it immediately if it is damaged.

Make sure your hard hat fits properly. 'Wear it proudly!

**CHRISTMAS IS COMING,  
HAVE YOU BEEN  
NAUGHTY OR NICE?**

*Words of Wisdom:  
"From what we get, we can  
make a living; what we give,  
however, makes a life."  
--Arthur Ashe*



