

An Alternative to Hard Hats?

Criteria:

Hard hats come in several different types and are all rated under ANSI Z89.1. Type 1 is a top only impact protection. Type 2 offers both top and side impact protection. Hard Hats are also broken into three classes relevant to possible electrical exposures under ANSI Z89.1.

- Class G is a general hard hat and for all purposes with limited electrical protection up to 2,200 volts.
- Class E is an electrical hard hat and offers the highest level of protection from electrical shock and up to 20,000 volts.
- Class C is a conductive hard hat and offers no electrical protection at all.



Traditional Hard Hats are plastic or fiberglass construction and are worn similar to that of a normal hat that sits on the head. The helmet is above the earline and has a suspension liner inside that absorbs impacts.

Hard hats have been the traditional head protection tool for over 40 years and have not been upgraded much at all. Hard hats commonly do not have any type of a strap to hold it to the head which allows them to fall off if the user takes a "header" fall or bounces. Hard hats are common in the construction industry and are many times worn backwards which violates manufacturers requirements.



New Helmets are modeled after the sport climbing and rescue industries. They offer better comfort and more of a wrap around protection of the head while providing a 4 point strap.

Helmets are gaining popularity due to the better comfort and protection offered in a bump or fall situation as the helmet is strapped on similar to a bicycle helmet.

The Helmet is the wave of the future and will very likely be the head protection going forward. The challenge will be the increased cost of a helmet, and getting employees and clients to see the value and accept the change.

Your employer is required to pay for all Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) required by a standard, process or activity. They must pay for any replaced PPE except when an employee has lost or intentionally damaged the PPE. OSHA requires a hard hat anytime there is a falling, dropping, bumping or electrocution hazard present in the construction industry. There really isn't many times that a hard hat can be removed. OSHA requires a hard hat in industrial work any time there is a potential injury to the head from a falling object or electrical shock. With all the innovation in today's world, the hard hat is being left behind.