Gulf Coast Safety Council

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Hard Hats Need to be Inspected Frequently

The hardhat is one of the most important pieces of personal protective safety equipment. It has prevented many serious injuries. Anyone entering our refinery is required to wear an approved hardhat to protect them from the impact of falling objects and from penetration injuries. Hardhats can also provide additional safety protection, including protection from rain and ultraviolet light.

A conventional hardhat provides limited protection by reducing the force of falling objects striking the top of the shell. It is not designed to protect workers from impacts to the front, side, or rear. Because hardhats can be damaged, they should not be abused. They should be kept free of abrasions, scrapes, and nicks. They should not be dropped or used as supports. Do not sit on your hardhat. Never drill holes in a hardhat.

Hardhats should not be carried on the rear window shelf of an automobile or stored in direct sunlight. Never use hardhats with metal parts or clips. Such hardhats will not meet the electrical conductivity requirements of the ANSI Z89.1–1997 standard for **Class G** hardhats or the NFPA 1977 (1998 edition) standard. Neither the hardhat shell nor the suspension system shall be altered or modified. The use of decals or lettering on hardhats should be kept to a minimum so cracks and defects can be easily seen. Clearance must be maintained between the shell and head for the suspension system to work properly.

The general service life of a hardhat can range from 2 to 5 years. All hardhats are susceptible to damage from ultraviolet light, extreme temperatures, and chemicals. Employees who are frequently exposed to sunlight, heat, cold, or chemicals should replace their hardhats more often.

Inspections

Both the hardhat's shell and suspension system must be inspected frequently for signs of wear and degradation. Field personnel who wear hardhats should check them before each use. The shell should be inspected routinely for dents, cracks, nicks, gouges, and any damage that might reduce protection. Any hardhat that shows signs of worn or damaged parts should be removed from service immediately. The shell material may be degrading if the shell becomes stiff, brittle, faded, or appears dull or chalky. With further degradation, the shell's surface may flake or delaminate. A hardhat should be replaced at the first sign of any of these conditions.

Here is a simple hardhat inspection.

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- Compress the shell from both sides about 1 inch with your hands and release the pressure without dropping the shell. The shell should return to its original shape quickly, exhibiting elasticity.

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- Compare the elasticity with that of a new shell. If the shell being tested does not have as much elasticity as the new shell, or if the shell cracks, it should be replaced immediately.
- Inspect the suspension system closely for cracks, cut or frayed shell straps, torn headband or size adjustment slots, loss of pliability, or other signs of wear. Remove and replace any suspension that is damaged.

For your viewing pleasure, below are excellent examples of <u>Non-Approved Hard Hats</u>:

This is not an approved Hard Hat.

Neither is this.

Not approved.

Uh . . . No.

By the way, this is <u>NOT</u> an approved face shield.