



SAFETY EMPHASIS

Missouri Department of Transportation

Hardhat Maintenance and Inspection

Protecting employees from potential head injuries is a key element of any safety program. Many workers have been saved from serious injury, or even death, because they were wearing a hardhat. Hardhats can protect you from impact and penetration hazards, as well as from electrical shock and burns.

Under the current MoDOT policy, hardhats must be worn when there is a possible danger of head injury from impact, falling or flying objects, electrical shock and burns or when Mine Safety and Health Administration rules require it. Some examples of specific tasks that require hardhat use including working around excavations and auger, platform, bucket and aerial lift trucks. You must also wear a hardhat when:

- operating a chainsaw;
- working around crane operations; and
- working within a contractor's construction zone and the contractor's employees are wearing hard hats.

Type 1 and 2 Hardhats

There are two types of hardhats that are most commonly used in the workplace today: type 1 and type 2. The type 1 hardhat meets stringent vertical impact and penetration requirements. The type 2 hardhat meets both vertical and lateral impact and penetration requirements.

Shell Inspection

The hardhat shell should be inspected routinely for the following defects:

- Dents, cracks, nicks, or gouges; and
- Damage due to impact, penetration, abrasions, rough treatment or wear that might reduce the degree of protection originally provided.

A decline in the shell's condition may be apparent when the shell becomes stiff, brittle, faded and dull in color or exhibits a chalky appearance. With further deterioration, the shell may flake or split into thin layers. A hardhat should be replaced immediately at the first sign of these conditions.

Suspension Inspection

As with the shell, the suspension must also be inspected and replaced periodically. Over a period of time, the suspension will become worn and may become damaged. Suspensions should be inspected closely for:

- Cracks
- Frayed or cut crown straps
- Torn headband or size adjustment slots
- Loss of flexibility or other signs of wear

Any suspension that is damaged must be removed from service and replaced immediately. It is recommended to replace the entire suspension system every 12 months.

Maintenance

Maintenance of the hardhat is an important part of keeping it in proper working order. Cleaning both the suspension and shell can extend a hardhat's service life. The following are some tips to extend the service life of your hardhat:

- Scrub the shell and suspension with a mild detergent to remove dirt and stains
- Rinse thoroughly with clean, warm water, not to exceed 50°C (120°F)
- After rinsing, wipe dry and once again carefully inspect for any signs of damage



Replacement Guidelines

It is impossible to provide a specific timeframe for hardhat replacement. As a general guideline, many companies replace all employees' hats every five years, regardless of the outward appearance. Hardhats should be replaced more often when exposed to extreme temperatures, sunlight or chemicals.

If the hardhat you put on every day is 12 years old and faded, brittle or dull in color from age, yet comfortable and familiar, do yourself and your family a favor by retiring it. Set it on your shelf as a keepsake and replace it with a new hardhat that can provide the intended protection.

Be Careful Out There