

TST #124-B

Hard Hat Safety

On a typical construction site, it is common to see hard hats worn backwards, to the side or with a baseball cap underneath. Not only does this put the operator in great danger, but it also subjects the company to a fine.

The standard hard hat has been engineered to be worn with the brim facing forward. The purpose of this design is that in the event a falling object strikes the hard hat, the brim will be pushed down to cover and protect the face. Unless a wide brim or other type of hard hat is used, it should always face forward.

The OSHA standard for hard hat use states that employees working in areas where there is a possible danger of head injury from impact, from falling or flying objects, or from electrical shock and burns shall be protected by protective helmets. If OSHA is called to a job site or makes an unannounced visit, the fine for violating the proper use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) ranges from \$500 to \$5,000. The fine is calculated on the potential injury that could have occurred had the PPE not been misused.

Some operators do not wear their hard hats on certain jobs because they think the job site is free of any overhead exposures. Not all dangers are obvious, however, and accidents often occur when a hazard is overlooked or underestimated. Operators often use excuses such as: “My hard hat falls off when I bend over to lift something” or “It’s too hot or uncomfortable.” If a hard hat falls off while an operator is lifting something, the hard hat may need adjusting. However, it could also indicate that the operator is lifting incorrectly by bending at the waist too much. And even though the hard hat might feel too hot to wear, it is important to view it as a lifesaver. In addition, it may offer some relief from powerful sunshine.

Remember that the OSHA standard does not state that hard hats are required only when the hazard is obvious. If operators are caught by surprise, there will not be enough time to even think about reaching for a hard hat lying on the ground or in the cab of the truck. It will be too late. The only way a hard hat can offer protection is if it is constantly worn — and worn correctly. There are no acceptable excuses.

Hard Hat Safety Quiz

The following statements should be answered with “True” or “False.” Answers below.

1. The potential OSHA fine of \$500 to \$5,000 for misuse of PPE is based on an actual injury occurring.
2. It is appropriate to wear a hard hat with the brim forwards or backwards on outdoor jobsites.
3. Appropriate use of hard hats is required on worksites even if no obvious hazards are present.
4. PPE stands for Personal Protective Equipment.
5. If your hard hat falls off when bending or lifting, it probably needs to be adjusted.

Employee Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Answers:

1. False
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. True