

OSHA Training Toolbox Talk: Personal Protective Equipment - Hard Hat Dos & Don'ts

[Reference 1910.135 / 1926.100]

ANSI-approved hard hats are designed to protect you from the impact of falling objects, and with some types, from accidental contact with electrical current. However, the way we take care for our hard hats can have a big impact (no pun intended) on how well it does its job.

Here are a few DOs and DON'Ts regarding the use and care of your hard hat:

- **DO CLEAN your hard hat as needed**, using a mild soap and water solution or other solution recommended by the manufacturer.
- **DO STORE your hard hat as recommended by the manufacturer**, which means keeping it out of the direct sun (like on the back dash of your car) and out of areas with high heat (like in the car trunk) while you're off the job.
- **DO INSPECT your hard hat shell and suspension for damage and deterioration every day** before use, as well as after any event that may affect its integrity (such as being struck by a falling object or crushed).
- **DO REPLACE your hard hat shell or suspension** when it shows any signs of damage or deterioration.
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- **DO NOT PAINT your hard hat**. Hard hat manufacturers typically forbid using paints because they can degrade the strength of the hard hat shell, making it easier to break.
- **DO NOT USE SOLVENTS to clean your hard hat**. Just like with paints, solvents can also degrade the strength of the hard hat shell.
- **DO NOT ALTER OR MODIFY your hard hat**. Drilling holes and/or inserting screws in your hard hat so you can add attachments (or for any other reason) can weaken the shell of your hard hat, and can also allow electrical current to pass through.
- **DO NOT WEAR YOUR HARD HAT BACKWARDS** unless specifically approved by the hard hat manufacturer and your employer.
- **DO NOT WEAR A BALL CAP OR TOBOGGAN BENEATH YOUR HARD HAT**. Doing so could interfere with the suspension and shell, which work together to reduce the force of an impact. Cold weather liners approved by the hard hat manufacturer are available.

Obviously, your hard hat won't protect you unless it's being worn. But to give you the maximum protection offered, they must also be worn in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations for the particular brand and model in use, as well as in accordance with the policy of your employer. So please take care of your hard hat, so it can take care of you.

Any question or comment about the proper care and use of your hard hat?