J.A. Montgomery CONSULTING

SAFETY DIRECTOR BULLETIN

HEAD PROTECTION SELECTION BEST PRACTICES

Evaluating head protection for public employees is a critical safety responsibility. Below is a structured approach to selecting and evaluating hard hats and helmets, referencing OSHA standards and industry best practices.

OSHA General Industry Standard 29 CFR 1910.135 requires employers to provide head protection when there is a potential for injury to the head from impact, falling or flying objects, or electrical shock and burns. Head protection must meet ANSI/ISEA Z89.1-2014.

Types	Type I	Reduces the force of impact from a blow only to the top of the head
	Type II	Reduces the force of impact from a blow to the top and sides of the head
Classes	Class C	**Conductive:** Does not offer protection from electrical hazards
	Class G	**General:** Contact with Low-Voltage Conductors Rated for 2,200 Volts
	Class E	**Electrical:** Contact with Higher Voltage Conductors Rated for 20,000 Volts
Designations	HV	High Visibility
	HT	High Temperatures Up to 140° F
	LT	Low Temperatures Down to 22° F
		**Reversible:** Reverse Donning Permitted

ANSI/ISEA Z89.1-2019 Industrial Head Protection

Start by conducting a Job Hazard Assessment (JHA), looking for potential hazards from being struck on the head by an object. Will the object only be falling from above the worker? Or is there a possibility that an object could strike the worker's head from the side? That will determine whether a Type I or Type II helmet is appropriate.

What is the risk of coming in contact with an electrified wire or conductor? Can the power be controlled by turning it off at the source? What level of voltage can be expected? Most building voltages are either 120 volts or 240 volts. Or will workers be potentially exposed to overhead transmission wires? The answers to these questions will determine which electrical protective class is appropriate.

Beyond these two regulatory considerations, managers should consider the many options provided by hard hat or helmet manufacturers.

- Will a chin strap be beneficial? The need for a chin strap should be determined by the amount of head movement, especially if the wearer will be frequently looking up and down.

  Note: Head protection without a chin strap is often called a 'hard hat'. Those with chin straps are often referred to as helmets.

- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is among the serious and disruptive occupational injuries. Selecting helmets with chin straps and suspension systems with shock-absorbing padding better protects from TBI.
- What accessories will or may be worn with the helmet? Will the helmet accommodate them? Will the helmet integrate attaching face protection, hearing protection, and other protective devices? Some helmets can accommodate a headlamp.
- Will high-visibility helmets or hard hats be beneficial for employees working on roadways? Beyond high visibility, would a specific color be appropriate and provide additional safety for workers in low-visibility conditions or in a complex background?
- Will extreme temperatures be a routine occurrence and warrant purchasing special protective head devices?

How the department selects its head protection should be clearly defined in its written Personal Protective Equipment Program, along with the Job Hazard Assessments (JHA) that are the basis for the decision. A model policy is available on the NJCE.org website Written Programs (Policies), along with sample Job Hazard Analysis (JHA's).

The head protection currently in use should be reviewed periodically, as advances in hard hat and helmet design are always ongoing. It is common for hard hats and helmets to have a life expectancy. Replacement is a perfect time for your agency to review Job Hazard Assessments and current head protection.