



When Should a Hard Hat Be Removed from Service?

The "hard hat" is an often overlooked yet valuable piece of personal protective equipment. It is mandatory within both the construction field and general industry; veterans in the trades can attest to its usefulness or can remember a situation where if it hadn't been for wearing a hard hat, someone may not have lived to tell about it.

As with any tool, its routine care and maintenance are essential components of an equipment inspection program. As a supervisor, not only do you have the responsibility to ensure that your employees wear all required personal protective equipment, but you must also ensure that safety equipment is in good working order as it relates to the manufacturer's instructions. In the absence of a specific safety standard or rule, Virginia businesses are required by VOSH to follow manufacturer's instructions regarding user training as well as the operation and maintenance of tools and equipment. This information can be found in the VOSH Administrative Regulations Manual.

www.doli.state.va.us

Listed below are guidelines that should support your personal protective equipment inspection program:

The following information must be marked appropriately inside hard hat:

- The manufacturer's name
- ANSI Z89.1-1997 or later
- Date of manufacture, not to be confused with the date that the hard hat was placed into service. With a permanent marker, document on the inside of the hard hat when it was actually placed into service. This may be required for warranty purposes.
- The class designation (A, B, or C)
- Hard hats do not have an infinite service life. Refer to manufacturer's recommendations relating to length of service and replacement .

Hard Hat Field Test:

Compress the shell inward from the sides about 1" with both hands and then release the pressure without dropping the shell. The shell should quickly return to its original shape, exhibiting elasticity. Compare the elasticity of the sample with that of a new hard hat. If the sample does not exhibit elasticity similar to that of a new shell, or if it cracks due to brittleness, it should be replaced immediately. (Source: www.bullard.com)

Hard Hat Inspection

Supervisor's Questions & Answers

When should a hard hat be removed from service?

There is no hard and fast rule on when an organization must remove a hard hat from service. Many large companies as a practice replace hard hats regardless of physical appearance every five years.

Exposure to direct sunlight, temperature extremes and chemicals warrants more frequent hard hat inspection and replacement. Depending on these conditions, certain hard hat manufacturers recommend replacement every two years. The replacement of personal protective equipment should be based on the actual working conditions in which the equipment is being used. Replacement may be sooner depending on user performance and everyday wear and tear.

Hard hats should be inspected daily for the following:

- Cracks of any size or type
- Loss of surface gloss
- Flaking, peeling (sign of advanced deterioration)
- Suspension harness located inside hat for frayed or missing components
- Discourage the practice of employees deliberately painting, applying unauthorized stickers and decorations. This is not recommended and may void warranty, unless otherwise specified by the manufacturer.
- If the hard hat has been struck by a direct, forcible blow or if the wearer suffered a head injury as result of falling objects, inspect the hard hat shell and internal suspension harness for damage. Replace immediately, even if there are no obvious signs of damage. Do not throw the hard hat away. Secure the hard hat and save for Accident Investigation purposes.

Most importantly, refer directly to the hard hat manufacturer's instructions related to care and maintenance. Failure to do so may void any associated warranty. Contact the hard hat manufacturer directly for specific "useful life" terms. Hard hats do not have an infinite period of service.

Technical References:

www.ansi.org
www.bullard.com
www.doli.state.va.us (VOSH Administrative Regulations Manual)
www.labsafety.com
www.safety.blr.com