

# **TOOLBOX TALK**

## **HEAD PROTECTION - HARD HATS**

Hard hats are required PPE on MEI jobsites to protect employees from head trauma caused by falling objects, striking their head against an object, or electrical hazards. Hard hats are designed to individually protect an employee when all other methods of protection cannot.

MEI Policy states: “Hardhats are required at all times on all jobs and while operating all equipment including equipment equipped with ROPS and/or FOPS. Hardhats are not required in office areas, walking to and from vehicles into office areas, in autos or trucks or construction equipment with fully enclosed cabs. This policy affects all employees, subcontractors, suppliers and visitors. Modified or defective hardhats and bump caps are not acceptable.”

There are two types of hard hats — Type I and Type 2. Type I helmets reduce the force of impact resulting from a blow only to the top of the head. Type II helmets reduce the force of impact resulting from a blow which may be received off center or to the top of the head.

The outer portion of the hat is the shell, which often has a peak that extends forward or a brim, which extends outward around the entire lower shell. The second component is the harness, which attaches to the shell to maintain the hard hat on the wearer’s head. When a force strikes a properly fitted hard hat, the force is distributed throughout the entire hard hat. It prevents the force from concentrating at one point.

Inspect a hard hat when it is new and first put into use, prior to each day’s use and after an incident where the integrity has been challenged. When inspecting a new hard hat, ensure that it is the proper hat for the job or the exposure to be expected and make sure all parts are included with the hard hat. Also, follow the manufacturer’s instructions to assemble or attach the parts and adjust the headband for proper fit; snug, but not tight.

When inspecting a hard hat prior to each day’s use, look for gouges; cracks; deterioration; chalking or discoloration; flaking; suspension properly attached to the shell; all straps in good condition; and cleanliness; suspension and the shell. When a hard hat is damaged, replace the damaged part or replace the entire hard hat.

OSHA does not specify the service life of a hard hat, and there is no standard expiration time frame for hard hats but review each work site to ensure that degradation of your hard hat is not being accelerated due to work conditions.

Prevention of head injuries is an important factor in every safety program. A single injury can handicap an employee for life, or it can be fatal.

**Please remember to wear your hard hat!**