

# Toolbox Talks

## PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT – HARDHATS



“Hardhats” are basic, potentially lifesaving protective equipment. However, they will only protect you if you wear them when you should and wear them properly.

Maine occupational safety regulations for public sector employees require that hardhats be worn by employees any time that:

- **They are exposed to the hazard of falling objects that could injure the head.** *This includes working with others above, working near lifting/hoisting operations, working in manholes or trenches, and in proximity to bucket loaders or construction equipment.*
- **They are exposed to accidental head contact with live electrical parts.** *This usually is an issue only for linemen and electricians.*

Hardhats should be selected based on a hazard assessment of the workplace. Protective helmets purchased after July 5, 1994, must comply with ANSI Z89.1-1997,2003 and or 2009.

Hardhat types:

- Type I Hardhats are intended to reduce the force of impact resulting from a blow only to the top of the head. This form of impact, for example, may result from a hammer or nail gun falling from above.



- Type II Hardhats are intended to reduce the force of lateral impact resulting from a blow which may be received off-center, from the side, or to the top of the head. This form of impact, for example, may result from contact with the sharp corner of a side beam.



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## Hardhat Classifications:

- Class E (Electrical) Hardhats are designed to reduce exposure to accidental / incidental high voltage conductors and offer dielectric protection up to 20,000 volts (phase to ground). This amount of voltage protection, however, is designated to the head only, and is not an indication of voltage protection allocated to the user. Formerly associated with a "Class B" rating, Class E hardhats may also be considered to have a Class G (General) rating, as their increased level of voltage protection surpasses the (lower) required standards of the Class G testing procedure.
- Class G (General) Hardhats are designed to reduce exposure to low voltage conductors and offer dielectric protection up to 2,200 volts (phase to ground). As is the case with Class E hardhats, this amount of voltage protection is designated to the head only and does not account for voltage protection allocated to the user.
- Class C (Conductive) Hardhats differ from their counterparts in that they are not intended to provide protection against contact with electrical conductors. To the contrary, Class C hardhats may include vented options, which not only protect the wearer from impact, but also provide increased breathability through their conductive material (such as aluminum) or added ventilation.

## **KNOW AND FOLLOW YOUR EMPLOYER'S PPE PROGRAM AS IT APPLIES TO HARDHATS!**

To protect you properly, your hardhat must be worn properly:

- Adjust the suspension just tight enough so that it won't move when you roll your head side to side.
- NEVER store any material between the shell and suspension. That space is there to save your skull!
- NEVER paint, drill or otherwise modify a hardhat without manufacturer approval, including stickers and hydro-dipping
- Inspect hardhats routinely for damage or deterioration on the shell or suspension. If damaged or defective, discard and obtain a replacement!

