

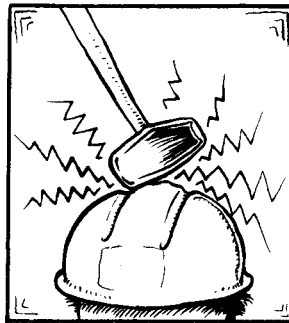
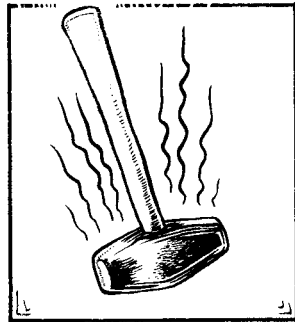
Protective Clothing and Equipment

Keep Your Hat On

It's a simple fact—a hard hat can save your life. Let's take a look at how this important piece of equipment does its job.

Anatomy of a Hard Hat

As the name suggests, hard hats are made of semirigid materials such as fiberglass, thermoplastics or aluminum. Full-brimmed hats (such as those worn by firefighters) have a brim that extends



all the way around the hat to protect the back and sides of the head, neck and shoulders. Visored hats have a brim only in front, an advantage in tight spaces. Inside the hat are straps that pass over your head and connect to an adjustable headband. These straps act like a cradle that holds the shell of the hat away from your head—there should be an inch and a quarter between you and the shell. Chin and nape straps keep the hat from being bumped or blown off. Your hard hat should carry the American National Standards Institute label (ANSI Z89.1) next to the manufacturer's name, and a Class A, B or C marking.

Types of Hard Hats

All hard hats protect you from the impact of falling objects. Class A hard hats also protect against electric shock from low-voltage conductors, and

Class B hard hats protect from high-voltage shock. Your hard hat may have accessories such as a faceshield mount and brackets for attaching a lamp or hearing protectors.

How They Protect

A hard hat can protect you from the impact of a hammer dropped from two stories above you. A hard hat does this because the shell is flexible enough to absorb some of the shock of the ham-

mer and transfer the rest of the impact to the webbing inside the hat, which stretches to absorb and distribute the remaining shock over a wide area of the head and body.

Use It Right

Because of its carefully designed construction, it is essential that you use your hard hat in the way it was intended. This means keeping that space between the webbing and the shell open, no matter how convenient a storage space it may seem to be. Avoid wearing headgear under your hard hat, except for cold-weather liners specially designed for it. And, when it comes to hard hats, "neither a borrower nor a lender be." Your hat straps should be adjusted to fit you and you only: snug but not tight. The hat should not tilt or slide around.

Take Care of It

Proper maintenance of your hat includes inspecting it every time you use it. Check for scratches, cracks, dents or brittleness. Wash the webbing in detergent at least every 30 days, and replace it when it seems worn or frayed. Avoid drilling ventilation holes, painting your hat (paint solvents can weaken the shell), or covering the shell in any way so you can't inspect it. And remember, a hard hat can protect you from a powerful impact only once. Because of this, avoid dropping or

throwing your hat, and ask for a replacement if you get hit. Your employer would much rather replace your hard hat than replace you. Many companies have a policy of replacing the shell and the webbing at regular intervals even when there is no visible damage.

Use Your Head

By following safe work procedures, keeping your protective headgear in good working order, and, most of all, using your hard hat when appropriate, you can avoid being one of the 70,000 people who will be disabled by head injuries this year. 