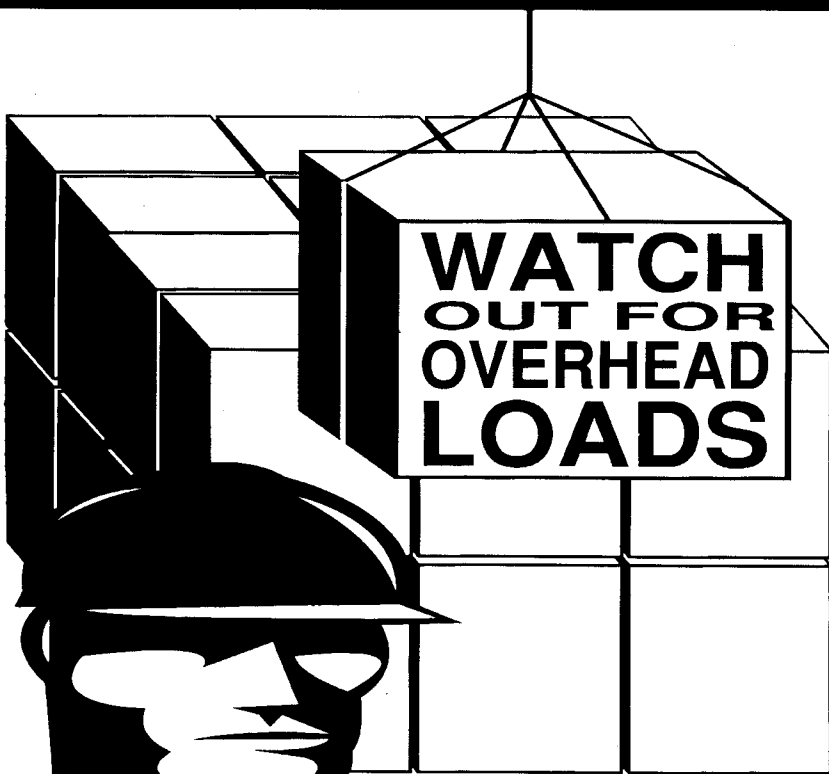


PROTECT YOURSELF FROM OVERHEAD HAZARDS



If you work in an area where things can fall on your head, your best protection is a hard hat. Because they are made of plastic molded under high pressure, hard hats resist not only impact, but water, oil, acid and electricity.

A hard hat has a built-in suspension system that acts as a shock absorber to cushion a blow. Even if the hat is dented or shattered by something that falls on it, it still takes the force out of the blow. But to provide the greatest possible protection, a hard hat needs to be properly maintained.

Keep Spare Parts for Your Hard Hat

The outer shell of a hard hat is supported by a suspension cradle that attaches to a headband. This

headband keeps the shell away from your head and provides a cushion if you're struck by a falling object. Since the headband and cradle are crucial to your protection, it's a good idea to inspect them periodically. If they show signs of wear and tear, replace them. Some companies keep extra cradles and headbands on hand for this purpose.

Caring for Your Hard Hat

Never attempt to repair the shell of your hard hat once it has been broken. Ask your supervisor for a new shell.

Never drill holes in your hat or cut notches in the brim to improve ventilation. This weakens the shell and reduces the hat's ability to protect you.

Clean your hat every 30 days. Wash it in warm, soapy water and rinse it. Steam cleaning is also recommended for the cradle and headband. This keeps sweat and dirt from rotting them.

Add Extra Protection

There are a variety of extra features available for use with hard hats. Hard hats with reflective trim, for example, can give you extra protection against traffic accidents if you work at night or in dark areas.

A chin strap is useful if you're exposed to strong winds. An eye shield made of transparent plastic can be attached to some hard hats; this shield secures under the brim and lies flat against the brim when not in use. Brackets to support a welding mask or miner's lamp are also available.

Wear It Right

What protects you most when you wear a hard hat is the shock-absorbing space between the hard shell of the hat and your head. So whatever you do, don't interfere with the suspension.

Suspension is greatly diminished if you wear a regular hat or parka hood under your hard hat. Instead, request a winter liner if you need extra warmth. Storing your work gloves between the shell of your hard hat and its suspension also diminishes protection. Keep that space between the headband and the shell free and clear so you'll have all the cushioning possible if something falls on you. 