U. S. Department of Labor
MSHA's Accident Prevention Safety Idea

SAFETY
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Wearing Hardhats Properly

According to 30 CFR § 56.15002, “All persons shall wear **suitable hard hats** when in or around a mine or plant where falling objects may create a hazard.” According to Program Information Bulletin P07-16, MSHA considers a “suitable hard hat” one that has been certified under a consensus standard such as American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Z89.1 to provide head protection in an industrial environment. In January of 2009, ANSI published a revision of the standard which includes the option of “Reverse Donning.” Helmets marked with a "reverse donning arrow" can be worn frontward or backward in accordance with the manufacturer's wearing instructions. They pass all testing requirements, whether worn frontward or backward.

To perform properly in this manner, the suspension must be reversed in the helmet, so that the headband is oriented normally to the wearer's head (i.e., with the brow pad against the forehead and the extended nape strap at the base of the skull). In this manner, only the shell of the helmet is backwards on the head. This applies to ANSI Z89.1-1997 Type 1 helmets only. ANSI Z89.1-1997 Type 2 helmets, because of the lower rear edge of the shell and the asymmetrical pattern of protection offered by their more complex design, should not be worn backwards.

ANSI Z89.1 Type 1

ANSI Z89.1 Type 2

Prior to wearing hard hats backward, always get written verification from the hard hat manufacturer on whether the hard hat model has been tested and found to be compliant to the requirements of the ANSI standard when worn with the bill turned to the rear.

MSHA recommends that hard hats be worn with the bill forward, but recognizes that certain jobs and conditions exist where this would be impractical.

Tag # AP2010-98297