



## Hardhat Fit and Inspection Safety Talk

Hardhats are one of the most common forms of personal protective equipment found on jobsites. They act as the last line of defense in helping to protect workers from overhead hazards that are abundant in a variety of industries. This safety talk will look at the components of a hardhat, how it should fit, and how to inspect a hardhat.

### Components of a Hardhat

Before inspecting a hardhat, it is important to understand its components. There are only two major components, which are the shell and the suspension. The shell is the outer part of the hardhat which is normally comprised of carbon fiber, fiberglass, polyethylene, polycarbonate, or rigid plastic. The suspension system is what is inside of the shell of the hardhat and rests on the head. It is what absorbs the shock to the head in the case of a blow or strike.

### Hardhat Fit Guidelines

A hardhat is only worth wearing if it fits correctly and is worn properly. A few guidelines to follow:

- The hardhat should fit on your head comfortably without easily coming off during your work.
- Never wear a hardhat backward unless it is designed to be worn either way. Many hardhats made today can be worn either way. Look for two arrows in a circle printed on the shell. This denotes that wearing it either way is acceptable. *(Image 1)*
- Do not wear a hoodie or hat under your hardhat unless the manufacturer approves it. Items worn underneath the hardhat will compromise the fit, thus rendering it less effective.
- Do not alter the hardhat in any way for it to fit better unless approved by the manufacturer. Physically modifying a hardhat in any way will compromise it in a manner you may not even realize.

### How to Inspect a Hardhat

Shell- Look for cracks, splitting, knicks, and dents. Look for any damage from impact or rough use. For hardhats made from materials such as polyethylene and polycarbonate, evaluate the shell for brittleness, fading, dullness, or a chalky appearance. Ultra-violet light is a common cause of the deterioration of a hardhat.

Suspension- Ensure all connection points of the suspension are intact and are firmly secured to the shell. Check the suspension for any tears, splitting, fraying. Ensure there is space between the top of the suspension and shell. This space allows for shock absorption to take place.

### When Should Hardhats Be Replaced?

Unless stated by the manufacturer, there is no expiration date for hardhats. Workers often mistake the manufacture date for an expiration date. The manufacturer date is a circle with an arrow and numbers printed on the inside of the shell. The larger numbers located next to the arrow indicate the year the hardhat was manufactured and the smaller number the arrow is pointing to is the month. *(Image 2)*

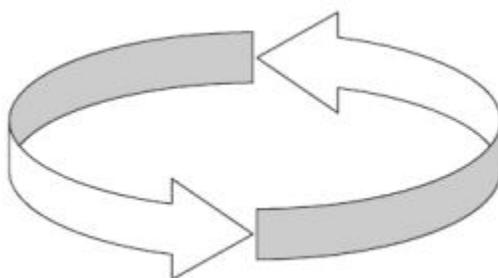
Many companies will require that workers replace their hardhat after five years of wear which is a standard guideline that manufacturers also have. When you put a hardhat into use you should write the date down on the inside of it so you are aware of how long you have been using the hardhat.

Work in some industries are more damaging to hardhats than in other industries and will warrant more frequent replacement.

**Discussion points:**

1. Has anyone ever witnessed a hardhat prevent an injury?
2. *Look at your hardhats and tell me the manufacture date and whether or not it can be worn either way.*

**Image 1:** *Two arrows in a circle denote that a shell of a hardhat can be worn either way. The suspension will often have to be locked in the specific way that warrants the shell to face the way the user wants.*



**Image 2:** *A manufacturer date on a hardhat. This hardhat was molded 2/2019.*

