

Facilities Management from A to Z



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H

ard hats

The Hard Hat or safety helmet has been a fixture on British building sites for more than a century. British manufacturer Centurion claims to have manufactured the first designs having manufactured the headgear since the late 19th century saying that the design was adopted from army pith helmets.

The *Construction (Head Protection) Regulations 1989* requires that suitable head protection, normally safety helmets, should be provided and worn whenever there is a risk of injury. Unless there is no foreseeable risk of injury, employees must be provided with hard hats and the employer must decide when, where, and how they should be worn.

Safety helmets, as outlined by the regulations, must always be worn in designated 'hard hat' areas. Only turban-wearing Sikhs are exempt from these requirements. The regulations allow an employer to make rules governing when and where hard hats should be worn, but they do not require head protection to be provided to people who are not undertaking construction work - for example, those delivering goods to a site, or site visitors.

However, in order to comply with the general duties under section 3 of the *Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA)*, employers and the self-employed person engaged in construction work should require visitors to wear suitable head protection if there is a foreseeable risk of head injury, other than the risk to those who may accidentally stumble or fall.

Employees must wear their hard hats properly and follow the instructions of their employer or the site rules. The regulations state that employees should take care of their hard hats and not misuse them, and that any defects or problems should be reported promptly.

The regulations also state that if hard hats are not provided on site, self-employed workers must supply their own. They must wear them when there is a risk of head injury or when told to do so by someone in control. They also need to follow the site rules, and in addition, maintain and replace their hard hat whenever necessary.

As a general guide, HSE advises that industrial safety helmets should be replaced three years after manufacture, but suggests checking this with the manufacturer also.

A free guide to the *Construction (Head Protection) Regulations 1989* can be downloaded from the HSE website www.hse.gov.uk