



Your Hard Hat Won't Warn You – Your Inspection Will

Your hard hat is your first line of defense against head injuries – but it can only protect you if it's in good condition. A quick inspection before every shift can help prevent a small issue from becoming a serious injury.

Inspect Your Hard Hat Before Every Use

Look for:

- Cracks, dents, gouges, or punctures in the shell.
- Fading, chalking, or brittleness caused by sun exposure or age.
- Loose, frayed, or damaged suspension straps.
- Missing or broken clips, headbands, or other components.
- Signs of chemical damage or excessive contamination.
- Unauthorized modifications such as drilled holes, paint, or excessive stickers that could weaken the shell or hide damage.

Know When It's Time to Replace It

Hard hats don't last forever. While service life varies by manufacturer and working conditions, many recommend replacing:

- **The hard hat shell every 5 years** under normal use.
- **The suspension system every 12 months**, or sooner if it's worn or damaged.

Always replace your hard hat immediately if it has taken a significant impact—even if no damage is visible. The shell may have been weakened and may not provide adequate protection during the next incident.

Most hard hats have a **date-of-manufacture stamp** inside the shell. Take a moment to check yours and make sure it hasn't exceeded its recommended service life.

APPA Guidelines & Industry Standards

The American Public Power Association (APPA) aligns its safety guidelines with [OSHA 1910.269](#) and the [NESC](#). The APPA's rules for lineworkers' head protection are divided into specific class requirements and replacement intervals.

Hard Hat Classes for Line workers

- Class E (Electrical): Mandated for electrical line work. This non-conductive helmet withstands up to 20,000 volts and protects against falling objects and severe electrical shock.
- Class G (General): Only provides protection up to 2,200 volts. These are prohibited for most live-line utility hazards.
- Class C (Conductive): Offers zero electrical protection and is prohibited for lineworker duties.

Service Life & Replacement Schedules

- Outer Shell: Replace every 5 years from the date the helmet is placed into service (even if it looks fine), or after 2 years if used in extreme environments with direct, intense sunlight, high heat, or chemical vapors.
- Suspension System: The webbing and straps inside the hat degrade faster than the outer shell and should be replaced every 12 months.
- Immediate Replacement: Discard and replace any hard hat immediately if it takes a forcible impact or a drop of 8 to 10 feet, regardless of whether damage is visibly apparent.

Protect What Matters Most

A hard hat only works when it's in serviceable condition. **Spend 60 seconds inspecting it before every shift.** That simple habit could prevent a life-changing injury tomorrow.