

PREOCCUPATION

AN OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD

You're walking across the jobsite when your mind drifts to the other subjects and ... BEEP! Close call - you didn't see that forklift coming. Many serious injuries occur when workers get distracted, unintentionally compromising the safety of themselves as well as others. But there are steps you can take to minimize hazardous preoccupations.

Note the CUES

Are you distracted? You are if you:
Suffer a series of uncharacteristic trips and falls
Often have trouble concentrating
Tend to continue working while listening to coworkers chitchat.

Clear Your MIND

To stay refreshed, always take your scheduled breaks and lunch hours.
If your mind keeps going back to one thought, make a deal with yourself; focus on the distraction at break time, so you can fully concentrate on the task in front of you; or schedule a 20-minute worry session before you start work or later in the day.
If your distraction is a coworker, postpone your conversation until break time.
If stressful thoughts or personal problems cause continual distraction, seek help from a friend or professional counselor.

Don't Be a Hardhead Wear a Hardhat

You only have one head. Wearing a hardhat can help you keep your head on your shoulders for a long time.

Knowing how to take care of your hardhat can extend that time even longer.

Hard hats protect you by providing the following features:

A rigid shell that resists and deflects blows to the head;

A suspension system inside the hat that acts as a shock absorber;

Some hats serve as an insulator against electrical shocks;

Shields your scalp, face neck, and shoulders against splashes, spills, and drips; and some hard hats can be modified so you can add face shields, goggles, hoods, or hearing protection if needed.

Objects might fall from above and strike them on the head;

They might bump their heads against fixed objects, such as exposed pipes or beams; or

They work near exposed electrical conductors.

What should you look for in head protection? In general, protective helmets, or hard hats, should:

Resist penetration by objects;

Absorb the shock of a blow;

Be water resistant and slow burning;

Come with instructions explaining proper adjustment and replacement of the suspension and headband.

Hard hats are divided into three industrial classes, Class A, Class B, and Class C.

Class A These helmets are for general service. They provide good impact protection but limited voltage protection. They are used mainly in mining, building construction, shipbuilding, lumbering, and manufacturing.

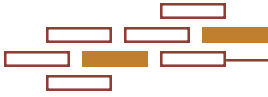
Class B Choose Class B helmets if you are engaged in electrical work. They protect against falling objects and high-voltage shock and burns.

Class C Designed for comfort, these light weight helmets offer limited protection. They protect workers from bumping against fixed objects but do not protect against falling objects or electric shock.

Look at the inside of any protective helmet that you are considering, you should see a label showing the manufacturer's name, the ANSI standard that it meets, and its class.

If you identify any of these defects, your hardhat should be replaced:

The suspension system shows signs of deterioration such as cracking, tearing, or fraying.
The suspension system no longer holds the shell from 1 inch to 1 1/4 inches away from your head.



(Don't Be a Hardhead, Wear a Hardhat cont.)

The brim or shell shows signs of exposure to heat, chemicals, ultraviolet light, or other radiation. Such signs include loss of surface gloss, chalking, or flaking (a sign of advanced deterioration).

To protect workers working below, chin straps should be worn on helmets worn by workers working at higher elevations, whether in an aerial lift or at the edge or at the edge of a pit. The chin straps should be designed to prevent the hard hats from being bumped off the workers' head.

Maintain and care for your hard hat. Paints, paint thinners, and some cleaning agents can weaken the shell of the hard hat and may eliminate electrical resistance. Keep in mind that paint and stickers can also hide signs of deterioration in the hard hat shell. Limit their use. Ultraviolet light and extreme heat, such as that generated by sunlight, can reduce the strength of the hard hats. You should not store or transport hard hats on the rear-window shelves of automobiles or otherwise in direct sunlight.

Clean the hard hat periodically by:

Immersing for one minute in hot (approximately 140 degrees F) water and detergent;

Scrubbing

Rinsing in clear hot water.



We welcome your comments and suggestions about the Connection. To submit articles and/or topic ideas, please call: (269) 629-9708 or send to P.O. Box 460, Richland, MI 49083. Also visit our website at: www.CLS-Skilledlabor.com

Beware of Those Sharp Pointed Objects

Part of your on the job safety procedure is to protect yourself from the hazards of your work by using safety goggles, face shields, gloves, and the like. You need to protect your hands and feet from the possibility of a puncture wound from a sharp object such as a nail. You should know two things about puncture wounds: how to prevent them and what to do if you get one.

The best way to protect yourself is to keep a clean work environment. This means removing nails from wood immediately when braces, guard rails, forms, and the like are dismantled. Move scrap lumber that may contain nails to a scrap heap away from pathways in the work area. Nails alone can be a hazard. They often land point up in mud, weeds, debris, or on bare ground if they have wide heads. Keep the work area clean of dust and other things that might hide nails, so you can spot them more easily. Be especially careful about areas at the base of ladders or other places where you or others might step down backwards.

In addition to keeping a clean work site, be extra careful using power tools that drive nails, staples, or punches, and follow recommended precautions when using them.

No matter how careful you are, you or someone else on the job may get a puncture wound. Always treat a puncture wound with special care, even if it doesn't seem to hurt very much. The reason for this is simple: the point of the sharp object carries bacteria deep into the flesh where antiseptics can't reach. The surface of the wound may heal while an infection is developing underneath. Report a puncture wound at once and thoroughly treat it. Then keep an eye on it. If the wound doesn't seem to be healing or if there is reddening, swelling, or increased pain, you may be developing an infection. If this happens you must see a doctor to get treatment that will prevent

serious complications. Anyone who works around sharp objects should also have a tetanus booster every five to ten years to prevent tetanus,

an even more serious puncture wound complication.

Good safety practices and prompt first aid are important to protect you from any job related injury. But you must take special care to both prevent and treat puncture wounds, because they can be deadly. Like so many safety programs, preventing puncture wounds mostly boils down to simple good housekeeping.

Ongoing Back Problems?

Treatment of ongoing back problems must be directed at the cause. This may mean losing weight (because being overweight can make back pain worse), getting your muscles in better shape, and improving your posture when you're sitting, standing and sleeping.

Tips for preventing back strain

Don't lift by bending over. Lift an object by bending your hips and knees and then squatting to pick up the object. Keep your back straight and hold the object close to your body. Avoid twisting your body while lifting.

Push rather than pull when you must move heavy objects.

If you must sit at your desk or at the wheel of a car or truck for long hours, break up the time with stops to stretch.

Exercise regularly. An inactive lifestyle contributes to lower back pain.