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Our head protection guide.

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Answering common questions in a handy guide.



HP
HP series safety helmet, fully adjustable and available in 6 colours.

Safety helmets as PPE

The Construction (Head Protection) Regulations 1989 require suitable head protection, normally safety helmets, to be provided and worn when there is a risk of injury. If you are in control of a site, eg as a principal contractor, you need to think about risks of head injury. There may be risks from falling materials or of knocking into things such as low scaffolds. Unless there is no foreseeable risk of injury you must provide your employees with safety helmets and decide when, where, and how they should be worn. Safety helmets must be worn in designated 'hard hat' areas. Only turban-wearing Sikhs are exempt from these requirements.

The Construction (Head Protection) Regulations 1989 allow you to make rules governing when and where safety helmets should be worn. These rules apply to everyone on site, and that includes visiting workpeople such as architects, delivery drivers and utility workers. These rules should be in writing and should be brought to the attention of all those who may be affected by them so that everyone knows when and where safety helmets are to be worn.

As with any type of PPE a safety helmet is the last line of defence when other solutions have failed. It is important to reduce or remove hazards wherever possible and often simple changes to working practice can make a significant difference. Consider for example toe boards on scaffolds, tethers for tools used at height and avoiding working below other people or machinery. Walking under a ladder can be unlucky in more ways than one if the person above drops something.



Types of safety helmet

There is a huge range of helmets currently available with different options for harnesses, peak lengths, ventilation, etc as well as colour. Many helmets can also accept accessories such as ear defenders or visors but it is important to ensure any accessories are designed for the particular make of helmet concerned. Safety helmets should not be confused with Industrial Bump Caps which are used for very different type protection and are virtually useless at protecting the head from falling objects.

How long will a safety helmet last?

The date a helmet is manufactured is marked on the shell, usually inside, but there is generally no expiry date. A helmet stored in a warehouse in a carton can still be safe to use after several years storage whereas a helmet left in the back window of car could suffer UV damage much sooner. Generally speaking 3-5 years of occasional use would be a good starting point but when used on site this could be considerably less. Minor damage from small impacts, dropping the helmet, scratches, sunlight and exposure to certain chemicals can severely reduce a helmet's life. If subjected to any damage, even minor, it is best practice to replace the helmet immediately as the cost of a new helmet is relatively little.

Helmet modifications

As a general rule helmets should not have any stickers attached unless approved by the manufacturer as certain adhesives can degrade the shell integrity. For similar reasons painting or marking with marker pen should also be avoided. If a company logo needs to be incorporated then this best done by the manufacturer. On no account should the helmet shell, harness or approved accessories be modified, for example to accept accessories it was not designed for. The same applies to wearing the helmet; wearing it other than as designed, such as back to front, can severely reduce protection.



More information available online at www.sitexindustrial.com

Our head protection guide. Common questions continued.



27,000⁺
Items of head protection in stock at any one time.



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Our selection guides to eyewear, respiratory, hand and arm protection, work at height, hearing protection, workwear and clothing and footwear.



New developments in our suppliers mask range, and Ultimesh™ technology.

Helmet maintenance

While the relatively low costs involved in purchasing safety helmets have almost made them a disposable product many safety helmets are used for long periods with no basic checks or maintenance. This can result in potentially unsafe products being used on a daily basis with the obvious risk of injury in the event of an accident. Some useful information on storage and maintenance is outlined below. We would recommend a documented system of checks at regular intervals and users should carry out a basic visual check on a daily basis.

- Safety helmets must be maintained in good condition.
- Be stored in a safe place, eg on a peg or in a cupboard on site;
- Not be stored in direct sunlight or in excessively hot, humid conditions because long-term exposure can weaken the shell;
- Be checked regularly for signs of damage or deterioration; This includes the shell, harness and accessories.
- Have defective parts replaced (if the model allows this). Parts from one model cannot normally be interchanged with those from another.
- Have the sweatband cleaned regularly or replaced.
- Before the safety helmet is issued to another person, it should be inspected to ensure it is serviceable and thoroughly cleaned in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, eg using soap and water. The sweatband should always be cleaned or replaced.

Damage

Damage to the shell of a helmet can occur when: objects fall onto it, it strikes against a fixed object or it is dropped or thrown. If damage is visible or the helmet has been subject to a significant impact, the helmet should be replaced immediately.

Certain chemicals can also weaken the plastic of the shell leading to rapid deterioration in shock absorption or penetration resistance. Chemicals which should be avoided include aggressive cleaning agents or solvent based adhesives and paints. Where names or other markings need to be applied using adhesives, advice should be sought from the helmet manufacturer.

Normally, helmets should be replaced at intervals recommended by the manufacturer. They will also need replacing when the harness is damaged or if it is likely that the shock absorption or penetration resistance has deteriorated. For example, when the shell has received a severe impact, or if deep scratches occur (ie; to a depth greater than 25% of the shell thickness) or if the shell has any visible cracks.

Conformity

There have been recent occurrences of counterfeit helmets being sold in the UK which while appearing to be fully compliant with the relevant standards were found to be dangerous. Buy your helmet from a reputable supplier and ask them for a copy of their CE Certificate. If a supplier cannot supply this certificate it may be worth asking yourself why? Sitex are always happy to provide CE Certificates on any of their products and answer any questions on suitability you may have.

Helmet accessories

There are a range of accessories available for safety helmets, the most popular being ear muffs, visors or chin straps. It is extremely important to ensure the relevant accessory is designed for the helmet being used. Even if the accessory will fit there is no guarantee the level of protection will be adequate as accessories are generally ONLY tested when fitted to that particular make of helmet.

