

The wear and care of safety helmets

Safety Flash Published on 4 June 2019 Generated on 28 January 2026 IMCA SF 13/19

This safety alert is intended to educate and inform people on the correct wear, care and inspection requirements of industrial safety helmets, and to provide guidance on how to check their expiry date.

Hard hats and safety helmets should:

- Be in good condition. **If it's damaged, don't use it; throw it away!**
- Fit the person wearing it and be worn properly.
- Not prevent the wearing of hearing protectors when needed.
- Only be obtained from a reputable supplier – there are fake hard hats on the market.

Helmets are reasonably inexpensive, yet they protect possibly the most important organ in the human body. If pre-use inspection causes any reservation, the helmet should be discarded and replaced immediately.

Life Span

Safety helmets do not last forever and have a finite life span after which they should be disposed of. Helmets will have some form of embossed date stamp similar to that in the illustrations below. Members may wish to ensure looking into ethical and appropriate recycling of old or expired safety helmets, in particular, ensuring they are not used elsewhere after being thrown out.

Exposure to the Environment and Chemicals

- Safety helmet shells are susceptible to:
 - UV light damage
 - temperature extremes
 - chemical degradation;
- Signs of degradation include:
 - stiff or brittle shells
 - faded, dull or chalky appearing shell.

Note: Replace shells exhibiting these characteristics immediately.

Markings

The material used for the helmet shell has been specifically chosen for its shock absorption and impact properties and for its durability. It can, however, be sensitive to chemical attack. For this reason, manufacturers have recommended that helmets are not:

- painted
- marked with felt tip pens
- decorated with labels or stickers unless they are of an approved type.

Cleaning

Clean helmets with warm soapy water and a soft cloth only. Replace any helmet which does not come clean with this treatment. Do not attempt to clean a helmet with solvents or abrasives.

Recommendations

Members may wish to refer to:

- UK HSE information on [hard hats on construction sites](#)

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