

Prevention Update



Preventing Head Injuries

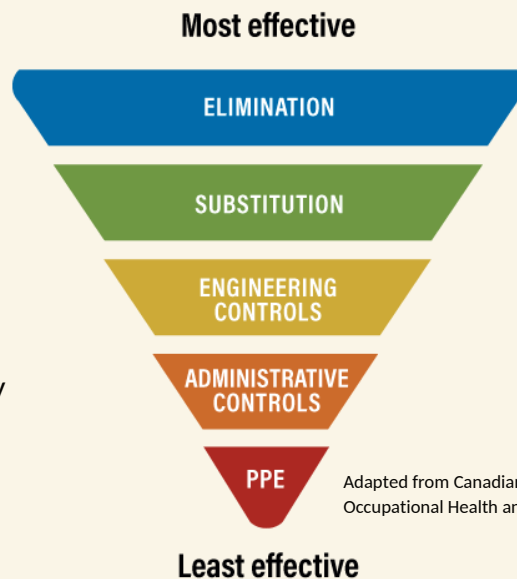
Each year, workers across various industries experience head injuries. These injuries can have serious consequences, including immediate issues like concussions or fractures, as well as long-term effects such as cognitive impairment and memory problems. In some instances, a severe blow to the head can be fatal.

Section 45.5 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* General Regulations outlines how employers must make sure that a worker on a worksite is protected from hazards that could cause head injuries. The Regulations also require workers to wear head protection that is appropriate to the hazard, and which meets the requirements of CSA Standard Z94. 1-15 Industrial protective headwear – Performance, selection, care and use.

Risk Management - Are you in Danger?

Before requiring workers to wear head protection, employers – in consultation with workers and supervisors – need to identify the workplace hazards and assess the risk of head injury. When a hazard exists, the employer must apply controls by following the hierarchy of controls. This means first attempting to eliminate the risk. If the risk can't be eliminated, engineering controls must be considered, followed by administrative controls. Head protection must only be a requirement if the risk can't be eliminated by using one or more controls.

Hierarchy of Controls



The hierarchy of controls is a method of identifying and ranking safeguards to protect workers from hazards. They are arranged from the most to least effective.

Adapted from Canadian Centre of Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS)

Here are level of control examples related to eliminating or reducing the risk of head injury.

Elimination or substitution:

- Exclusion zones or safe zones that eliminate the need for head protection

Engineering controls:

- Safety nets to catch falling objects
- Temporary or permanent solid barriers to prevent objects from falling, being thrown, or sent flying from work areas
- Temporary or permanent physical barriers to prevent workers from entering hazard areas
- Tethering and securing tools, materials, and equipment to prevent these from falling
- Using automation or other changes to the workplace to prevent workers from entering areas where a risk of head injury exists

Administrative controls:

- Requiring work to stop when other workers are underneath elevated work areas
- Creating designated pedestrian-safe walkways that are free from overhead hazards
- Using spotters to alert workers to vacate areas when overhead hazards are present
- Using signs to alert workers to overhead hazard areas and, if necessary, to communicate the need for head protection before entering those areas

Personal Protective equipment

- Use of head protection

Head protection is the lowest level of control. It must be worn when elimination and substitution, engineering controls, or administrative controls can't eliminate the risk of head injury.

Head Protection and Religious Head Coverings

Various communities have voiced concerns about not being able to fully participate in the workforce because of a rigid approach to safety head protection requirements. For example, some individuals wear religious head coverings as an integral part of their religious and cultural identity, which is deeply rooted in their faith and values. However, some workplace safety policies can clash with these traditions, as these head coverings may not fit under conventional safety head protection. Workplace safety policies should not lead to discrimination, limited job opportunities, or even exclusion of individuals from certain industries.

It's important for employers to acknowledge the importance of accommodation and diversity in the workplace. Finding solutions that both prioritize safety and respect individuals' rights to practice their faith without hindrance is best practice. By doing so, we can ensure a more inclusive and equitable workforce for all.

All workers MUST wear safety head protection on the job when the risk of head injury can't be eliminated.

Tips for Workers

1. **Discuss hierarchy of controls** – Speak with your employer or worksite safety representative to determine if head protection is necessary.
2. **Use your voice** – Make your employer aware of your specific requirements and the significance of your religious head covering. Education and awareness can foster a more inclusive and understanding workplace.
3. **Reduce the size of the head covering** - To make it fit under CSA approved head protection, when possible.
4. **Make time for a fit test** – Make sure head protection is properly adjusted so that it can accommodate the religious head covering.
5. **Make sure the fit is secure** – A chin strap is an effective way of keeping head protection securely in place. A chin strap is required when workers are exposed to high wind or other conditions. It may be necessary when a religious head covering prevents a secure fit.

