OSHA Recommends Use of Safety Helmets Rather Than Hard Hats for Certain Job Sites

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OSHA has announced that it is replacing traditional hardhats used by its employees with more modern safety helmets to protect them better when they are on inspection sites. Among other problems, hard hats may fall off the worker's head if the worker slips and falls. Furthermore, traditional hardhats lack vents and trap heat inside.

In its Safety and Health Information Bulletin issued November 22, 2023, OSHA noted that traditional safety helmets are made of rigid materials which provide only a basic level of protection. Recent technology advances and scientific understanding of head injuries have advanced, and OSHA now recommends safety helmets to provide further enhanced worker safety and reduce the risk of severe head trauma.

Generally, employers are required to conduct a hazard assessment at their job sites, and based upon those hazards, the employer is to determine whether head protection is necessary. Once the determination is made that head protection is required, OSHA encourages employers to consider using safety helmets rather than traditional hardhats so that employees are better protected. OSHA recommends the use of safety helmets at the following job sites:

1. Construction sites;
2. Oil and gas industry;
3. Working from heights;
4. Electrical work;
5. High temperature environments;
6. Specialized work environments that may require face shields, hearing protection, and communication devices;
7. Specific regulatory requirements where safety helmets are mandated by regulations or industry standards; and
8. Low risk environments. OSHA notes that even in settings with no overhead hazards, safety helmets could provide comprehensive protection.

For specific OSHA-related questions, contact Larry L. Cash, Scott Simmons or any member of Miller & Martin's Labor and Employment group.