

# October 2024

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# 2024-10-07 Hard Hat Dos and Donts

ANSI-approved hard hats are designed to protect you from the impact of falling objects, and with some types, from accidental contact with electrical current. However, the way we take care for our hard hats can have a big impact (no pun intended) on how well it does its job.

Here are a few DOs and DON'Ts regarding the use and care of your hard hat:

**DO CLEAN** your hard hat as needed, using a mild soap and water solution or other solution recommended by the manufacturer.

**DO STORE** your hard hat as recommended by the manufacturer, which means keeping it out of the direct sun (like on the back dash of your car) and out of areas with high heat (like in the car trunk) while you're off the job.

**DO INSPECT** your hard hat shell and suspension for damage and deterioration every day before use, as well as after any event that may affect its integrity (such as being struck by a falling object or crushed).

**DO REPLACE** your hard hat shell or suspension when it shows any signs of damage or deterioration.

**DO NOT PAINT** your hard hat. Hard hat manufacturers typically forbid using paints because they can degrade the strength of the hard hat shell, making it easier to break.

**DO NOT USE SOLVENTS** to clean your hard hat. Just like with paints, solvents can also degrade the strength of the hard hat shell. ☐

**DO NOT ALTER OR MODIFY** your hard hat. Drilling holes and/or inserting screws in your hard hat so you can add attachments (or for any other reason) can weaken the shell of your hard hat and can also allow electrical current to pass through.

**DO NOT WEAR YOUR HARD HAT BACKWARDS** unless specifically approved by the hard hat manufacturer and your employer.

**DO NOT WEAR A BALL CAP OR TOBOGGAN BENEATH YOUR HARD HAT.** Doing so could interfere with the suspension and shell, which work together to reduce the force of an impact. Cold weather liners approved by the hard hat manufacturer are available. Obviously, your hard hat won't protect you unless it's being worn. But to give you the maximum protection offered, they must also be worn in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations for the particular brand and model in use, as well as in accordance with the policy of your employer. So please take care of your hard hat, so it can take care of you.

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# 2024-10-14 TBT Excavation: The role of the Competent Person

Every action you take on an excavation site could have negative ramifications on the safety of yourself or others. Digging in an area without first locating underground utilities could cause serious disruption of service, and maybe even an electrocution or explosion.

Entering a trench that does not have a properly constructed protective system could result in you being caught in a sudden cave-in. And entering an excavation containing a hazardous atmosphere could prove to be deadly as well. Because of these and other hazards associated with excavation work OSHA, requires [companies / organizations] like ours to designate someone at the excavation site to be responsible for performing critical functions to help ensure the safety of our workers and that person is known as the “Competent Person”.

Here is an overview of just a few of the major duties performed by the Competent Person at an excavation site: □ □ □ □

The Competent Person analyzes the soil and other conditions at the excavation site to determine whether or not we must utilize some form of protective system, such as sloping, shoring, or a trench box, to prevent workers from being caught in a cave-in when we are working inside certain excavations.

- The Competent Person determines that any protective system we do utilize is adequate in terms of strength and suitability for the excavation where it is being utilized, and that it is properly installed, moved, and removed throughout the course of the job.
- The Competent Person also conducts regular inspections of the excavation sites, protective systems, and equipment in use to identify any hazards that may develop while we are working in an excavation. This may even include evaluating certain excavations for the presence of a potentially hazardous atmosphere, or evaluating whether unexpected events like a heavy rain storm or a broken water pipe have created a hazardous condition that must be addressed before we resume work. And last but certainly not least,
- The Competent Person has the authority from his or her employer to remove workers from areas whenever any hazardous situation arises until the hazard have been corrected or removed. However, the Competent Person cannot always be everywhere on the jobsite, nor can they see everything that is going on.
- If you see something that doesn't look right, then inform the Competent Person or your supervisor of what you've seen.

Do you know who the Competent Person is at our worksites?

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# 2024-10-21 TBT Portable Fire Extinguishers

The steps to using a portable fire extinguisher seem simple to remember; at least until you are faced with a real fire! Many people in this situation have reported that their mind “goes blank”, and as a result they were unable to get their portable extinguisher to function properly, or they failed to extinguish the fire.

We have previously reviewed proper selection of fire extinguishers, and we have also discussed how they work to extinguish a fire. So today we are going to review the four steps to follow when using a portable extinguisher, and they are as easy as remembering the word “PASS”.

Each letter in “PASS” stands for one of the four sequential steps to properly use the extinguisher:

**“P” stands for “PULL” the pin.** The pin in the handle keeps you from accidentally discharging the extinguisher during normal handling, and must be removed for it to function. There’s usually a thin plastic tamper seal holding this pin in place, and it easily breaks when you pull out the pin.

**“A” stands for “AIM” at the base of the fire.** This step is crucial because you must direct the extinguishing media towards the material that is actually burning so it can extinguish the flame.

**“S” stands for “SQUEEZE” the handle of the portable extinguisher from a safe distance.** This causes the extinguishing media to discharge from the extinguisher. An extra word of caution; if you are using a CO2 extinguisher, avoid touching the horn-shaped discharge nozzle, as it can cause frostbite.

**“S” stands for “SWEEP” from side to side across the base of the fire as you approach, to make sure the extinguishing media completely covers the burning material and puts out the fire.**

Then, keep an eye on the area for a while in case a hot spot flares up and the fire starts to burn again. These four steps for using a portable extinguisher are simple, but can easily be forgotten when faced with an unexpected fire. So, in review; here are the four steps to take when using an extinguisher to put out a small fire. And they can be as simple as remembering PASS – which stands for Pull, Aim, Squeeze, and Sweep. But also remember that you should never, ever, attempt to put out a fire with an extinguisher if you are unsure about your ability to do so safely and effectively!

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# 2024-10-28 TBT Guidelines for open holes

Open holes in walking and working surfaces present a variety of potential hazards to employees. If a hole is large enough, and unguarded, a person could fall through the hole to the surface below. And even if the hole is too small for a person to fall all the way through, someone could still step into a hole and wrench an ankle or knee, or trip and fall. And in some cases, objects lying on the surface can be accidentally knock into a hole and fall to a lower level, possibly striking a person below. When you see an open hole, it may be tempting to grab something like a piece of plywood or some sheet metal and place it over the hole to prevent someone from getting hurt. However, accidents could still occur if the cover you put over the hole is not strong enough to withstand the weight applied by a person or equipment, or if the cover get unintentionally removed or displaced and someone subsequently steps into or falls through the hole. OSHA regulations contain minimum specifications regarding covers that are placed over holes present in walking and working surfaces.

These specifications include, but are not limited to, the following: • All hole covers must be capable of supporting, without failure, at least twice the weight of employees, equipment, and materials that may be imposed on the cover at any one time;

- All covers have to be secured when installed so as to prevent accidental displacement by the wind, equipment, or employees; and,
- All covers shall be either color coded or marked with the word "HOLE" or "COVER" to provide warning of the hazard.

So, before you place a cover over a hole, make sure it is first approved by a Competent Person to ensure it meets all applicable specifications. To recap; any time you discover an unguarded hole in a walking or working surface, take steps to notify others of the hazard right away. Then immediately alert your supervisor, safety rep, or designated Competent Person so they can ensure a proper cover is placed securely over the hole. Or, if a cover is not feasible, they will make sure some other protective measure is taken, such as installing a guardrail around the hole, or require use of a different type of fall protection system.

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