History of the Hard Hat

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Before 1920s, few people wore hard hats

Construction was tough and so were the men

Hard hats were unmanly - showed you were afraid
No hard hats and little regards for safety
Hard hat’s roots appears to come thru the military’s helmet
Greek Helmet - 500 BCE
Celtic Parade Helmet - 350 BCE
Black Mongolian Helmet - 1300
Ottoman Helmet - 1600
After WW I

Surplus helmets were readily available

One company owner (son was in the USA Army) was inspired to use the WWI helmet as a model to start making hard hats

This company was already making miner’s hats – saw this as a developing market
WWI Helmet (Marines)
First manufactured hard hat 1919

E. D. Bullard Company

Called the Hard Boiled Hat

Made of canvas, glue and black paint
The Hard Boiled Hat
U.S. Navy wanted protective hats

Shipping yard had a lot of overhead work during loading and unloading of ships

Danger of falling items during this process

Seagulls dropping “stuff” on workers – needed protection
Purchased the Hard Boiled Hats
Telephone Lineman – made their own “hard hats”

Stuffed newspapers into their hats

Provided some protection from small falling objects
The Electrical Union - Post Office Boston - 1931

Electrical worker wanted protection from falling hot rivets

Used surplus WW I Helmets

This may be the first documented use of hard hats on a construction site
Hoover Dam 1931-1935
High Scalers wanted protection from falling objects

Made their own “Hard Hats”

Two “baseball hats” put together, smeared with tar and baked in the sun
(Temperatures there exceeded 120 F)
Basically the same as the Hard Boiled Hat
Hard Hat Success

One instance - A High Scaler was hit so hard on his hard hat by a falling object - it broke his jaw. No damage to his skull.

Company was so impressed – they brought hard hats for everyone.
Hoover Dam - High Scalers
Entire crew wearing hard hats
First project where hard hats were mandated

Golden Gate Bridge 1932-1937

Chief Engineer wanted a safe project

Mandated hard hats and safety nets
Development of the hard hat

Making it lighter and more comfortable

One innovation - the Aluminum Hard Hat - not for electrical workers

Still available today
Aluminum Hardhat
Modern hard hat

Most are now made with thermoplastics

Light weight - relatively comfortable to wear
Color coded to identify workers

White - Managers and Engineers
Yellow - General workers
Orange - Road crew
Blue - Carpenters
Brown - Welders
For site visitors

Grey Hard Hat

Note: They need to keep an eye on them – they may wander into danger!
For those that forget their hard hat
Pink was used to shame them
Now a Symbol of Pride and Hope

The pink hard hat is now a symbol of pride for women owned businesses and for breast cancer awareness.
Modern hard hat - has come a long way
Newest Design in Hard Hats
Hard hat as a fashion statement?
Hard hats showing academic achievement - ASU Graduation for Construction Management Students
Questions ???