

Regulatory amendment: A primer on safety headgear

In April 2021, WorkSafeBC's Board of Directors approved changes to the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Regulation, which took effect on September 1, 2021. Included in these changes are amendments to section 8.11(1) and the requirements for safety headgear.

Background

Controlling exposures to hazards in the workplace is fundamental to protecting workers, but often personal protective equipment (PPE), such as safety headgear, is used as a first line of defence from serious safety hazards. The Sikh community has raised concerns that those employers who require the use of safety headgear such as hard hats are excluding turban-wearing Sikh workers from being able to fully participate in the workforce.

PPE is considered the least effective control measure as it does not eliminate a hazard but merely puts a barrier between the hazard and the worker. Following the hierarchy of controls ensures measures such as elimination, engineering controls, and administrative controls are applied before relying on PPE.

Objective of the regulatory amendments

The purpose of these revisions is to improve occupational health and safety by requiring employers to follow the hierarchy of controls to eliminate or reduce risks.

The hierarchy of controls ranks risk controls from the highest level of protection to the lowest. Under the amended requirements, employers must take measures

to eliminate the risk of head injury first. If the risk cannot be eliminated, engineering controls and administrative controls must be applied before relying on safety headgear.

Workers must wear safety headgear if it is not practicable to eliminate the risk of head injury, or if engineering and/or administrative controls are not adequate to reduce the risk of head injury to the lowest level.

A **new OHS guideline** has also been developed to provide information on identifying and controlling the risk of head injury from overhead hazards by following the hierarchy of controls. The guideline also provides information on what to do if there is a disagreement between an employer and a worker on the appropriateness of the control measures selected.

The acceptable standards for safety headgear have not changed with this amendment.

For more information

Visit worksafebc.com to read the amended **section 8.11(1)** of the OHS Regulation and the corresponding OHS **guideline G8.11(1)**. A **resource for workers** is also available.