



Transitioning from Hard Hats to Safety Helmets

Purpose

The Job-Site Safety Institute provided a grant to North Carolina State University and George Mason University to conduct a case study to investigate and analyze the business and safety benefits for small construction firms to transition from traditional hard hats (Type I) to protective safety helmets (Type II) to reduce the risk of traumatic brain injuries from a fall or a blow to the head. Every year, over 200 construction workers die from traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) in the U.S. and many of these deaths could have been prevented with better head protection.

Problem

Traditional hard hats (Type I) offer limited protection against lateral and rotational impacts, leading to traumatic brain injuries (TBIs).

Solution

Type II safety helmets provide 360-degree head protection, enhanced impact resistance, and improved retention systems to enhance comfort and safety.

Research Question

Can a targeted intervention shift attitudes and increase willingness to adopt Type II safety helmets among construction workers?

Key Insights

Overall, the intervention was effective in shifting attitudes but highlighted the need to address practical barriers for widespread adoption of Type II helmets.

- **Better head protection.** Over 92% of participants were confident or very confident that Type II safety helmets offer superior protection.
- **Openness to Change:** More than 75% of participants were willing or very willing to transition to Type II helmets after the intervention (Figure 1), though actual adoption might be hindered by practical barriers.
- **Preference for Type II Helmets:** Over 86% preferred Type II helmets post-intervention, though about 13% still favored Type I hard hats, believing a switch was unnecessary for their specific work contexts.
- **Practical Barriers:** Participants identified obstacles such as:
 - Additional costs of upgrading personal protective equipment (PPE).
 - Limited influence over employer purchasing decisions.
 - Social norms and practices within work environments.
- **Need for Systemic Support:** Feedback underscored the need for broader systemic and organizational support to facilitate adoption, beyond educational efforts.
- **Context-Specific Messaging:** Tailored education on enhanced head protection was deemed essential, especially for roles with lower perceived risks.



View the full report at jssafety.org.

JSI's goal is that everyone in the construction industry who goes to work comes home safely to their family. Our mission is a research and educational organization dedicated to eliminating job-site related injuries and deaths in the construction industry.

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