Industrial safety helmets, or hard hats as they are most commonly known, are required to be worn in situations where you may be at risk from head injuries from falling materials or impact injuries on construction sites. The Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992, is the law that specifies this to be the case. Employers have to manage and plan work accordingly to reduce risks, however if residual risks still remain then PPE must be worn and head protection falls into this category. This will apply to the vast majority of construction activities.

Hard hats are manufactured and tested in the UK to BS EN 397. This European standard code of practice provides guidance for manufacturers of hard hats, to ensure minimum materials grades are used in the production of the hard hat, and the requirements of the testing to be undertaken to keep users safe in accordance with the minimum requirements specified in BS EN 397.

There are many different styles of hard hats which can be purchased, but essentially the manufacturing process and testing of these will remain the same. The helmets are designed to primarily protect the upper part of a wearers head against injury from a falling object.

The helmet will comprise of 2 main parts, the hard outer protective shell and the inner harness which will provide a means of:
A) Maintaining the helmet in position on the head; and/or,
B) Of absorbing kinetic energy during an impact.

Additional specifications are provided for ear muff attachment points, and chin strap attachment points that are not covered in this information sheet.
Every helmet intended to comply with the requirements of this European Standard is required to carry molded or impressed markings giving the following information:

a) The number of the applicable European Standard. (In this case BS EN 397);
b) The name or identification mark of the manufacturer;
c) The year and quarter of manufacture;
d) The type of helmet (manufacturer’s designation). This shall be marked on both the shell and the harness;
e) The size or the size range (in centimetres). This shall be marked on both the shell and the harness;
f) Abbreviation for the material of the shell shall be in accordance with EN ISO 472. (For example, ABS, PC, HDPE, etc.)

Additional information must be supplied in printed format with the hardhats which provides users with instruction, limitations to use and the aftercare guidance of the hard hat, which include detail such as which cleaning agents are suitable for use.

As a minimum, these instructions must notify the user of the danger of modifying or removing any of the original component parts of the helmet. No paints, adhesives, solvent or adhesive stickers are to be applied to the helmet other than those stated by the manufacturer.