



**NATIONAL WILDFIRE
COORDINATING GROUP**

June 28, 1993

Memorandum

To: NWCG Members
From: Chair, NWCG
Subject: Protective Headgear (Hard Hats)

It has come to our attention that misunderstanding between some of our member agencies may exist about approved/recommended protective headgear. Some agencies (or regions within agencies) have adopted and fully implemented the current ANSI standards, while others may have adopted the standard but not fully implemented same due to procurement/fiscal timeframes. This has led, at least in one instance, to one agency's refusal of assistance by a cooperating agency resource, though both agencies met their own personal protective equipment policies which had been mutually agreed upon previously.

To mitigate future such misunderstandings, NWCG has agreed upon the following position regarding procurement and issuance of protective headgear. This will also help clarify concerns regarding penetration, deformation and/or melting of hardhats in wildland fire suppression activities.

The General Services Administration (GSA) catalog carries two distinctly different types of plastic hard hats on schedule. One is designated "Safety Helmet", and is intended to be worn by construction workers on construction sites in a normal temperature situation. The other is designated "Helmet, Safety, Wildfire", and is intended specifically for wildland fire suppression duty. It is required to withstand a temperature of at least 350 degrees F., far in excess of the 140 degrees at which human skin burns. This temperature requirement provides ample head protection to our employees any time they are exposed to excessive heat, whether directly or indirectly. The "Safety Helmet" does not meet the 350 degree requirement.

Additionally, both helmets must meet the ANSI Z89.1-1986 standard for the drop protection penetration test, while the "Helmet, Safety, Wildfire" must also meet the 20,000 volt electric non-conductor test (the construction type "Safety Helmet" does not). This ANSI standard precludes the use of the typical aluminum "ball cap" hardhats that have been in common use by our members.