

Head Impacts: Plan the Movement in Tight Spaces

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Why this matters

A worker can clear an obstruction while crouching and strike it when standing or turning. Plan the whole movement, including the way out.

Objective: Identify head-impact paths and verify controls before entering the work position.

Key hazards or failure points

Low beams; projecting brackets; obstructed vision; turning with tools; incompatible head protection; unexpected movement.

Practical controls

- Remove or avoid the obstruction where practicable. Reposition the task or establish a protected route before relying on warnings or PPE.
- Control nearby movement and provide suitable visibility. Have the responsible person assess head protection for the actual impact and electrical hazards.
- Use correctly fitted, compatible equipment under its instructions. Do not remove required head protection or modify it to squeeze through.

Verify It in the Field

From outside the restricted position, trace entry, work, standing, turning and exit. Include tools and the space occupied by PPE.

Confirm the approved clearance arrangement and protection are present. Resolve unseen sections without sending a worker in to try the fit.

Check model identification, condition and fit in a safe area with the other PPE. Record the selection basis and unresolved interference.

Stop and reassess

Hold entry for uncertain clearance, obstructed escape, unexpected motion or unsuitable protection. Change the arrangement and verify it before proceeding.

Ask the crew

1. Where will your head move next?
2. Can we change the work position?
3. What would make us withdraw?

Use this HOP tool — Task preview: Describe the task without entering the tight position. Have a coworker identify where standing, turning or withdrawing could bring the head into contact. Choose one change that removes the impact path, then identify who will verify the revised arrangement before entry.

Sources: OSHA 1926.100; OSHA Head Protection: Safety Helmets in the Workplace; DOE Vol. 2, pp. 6–7. HOP concepts adapted from DOE-HDBK-1028-2009, Vol. 2 (June 2009). No claim to original U.S. Government work; no government endorsement implied.

Free next step: JHA/JSA planning and field-verification worksheet

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/head-impact-tight-spaces