

FAQ

Industrial Safety Helmets Frequently Asked Questions

• What is the service life of my MSA Safety helmet ?

All V-Gard helmets were designed with high quality, UV stabilized materials (HDPE or ABS) but **they will not last forever.**

The protective properties of the helmet will be degraded by exposure to many common work environments, such as temperature extremes, chemical exposure, and normal daily wear and tear.

As required by European regulation, MSA provides recommendation on industrial helmets service lifetime :

- HDPE shell (V-Gard) 36 months (3 years)
- ABS shell (V-Gard 200, V-Gard 500, Linesman) 60 months (5 years)
- Nylon Shell (Thermalgard) 60 months (5 years)

Note : these are only recommendations, as MSA cannot preclude of the conditions in which each individual helmet will be used.

The suspension being directly in contact with the wearer's head, MSA recommends that it is regularly replaced (every 12 months).

However, the condition of an industrial safety helmet depends on its use, care and the conditions to which it is exposed.

Wear or damage noticed during a regular inspection must be the determining factor for possible earlier replacement.

On the individual product instructions, **MSA recommends a daily inspection of the helmet:**

- Inspect the helmet (including the suspension) for cracks and distortion.
- Squeeze the helmet and listen for cracks and unusual noises, which could be signs of deterioration.

In every case, always replace the helmet after it has withstood significant impact or penetration.

• There is a date code moulded under the brim of my MSA Safety helmet : is this when the service life starts ? Why isn't there a end-of-life date code moulded under the brim ?

A helmet's service life starts when it is actually handled to the worker and placed in service. This date should be recorded when the helmet is provided to the individual end-user, for instance on a simple label applied inside the helmet shell.

Please note that the «date code» on the brim of your MSA helmet is the date of manufacture (shell injection), not the actual starting date of use, as the period between manufacturing and actual distribution to the worker can vary greatly.

The helmet recommended maximum shelf life (storage time before helmet is put in service) is 36 months (helmet packed in proper condition, not exposed to light, chemical or any type of pollution).

If the helmet has been stored more than 36 months, deduct the extra storage time from the recommended helmet's service life.

MSA believes that a hard moulded "end of life" date could be misleading as :

- it could shorten the service life if the helmet has been stored prior to being handled to the user.
- It could be interpreted as a firm date for replacement, while replacement could occur earlier in case of incidents or exposure to hazards.

• I have seen other helmets with a UV exposure indicator which gives me the time when my helmet should be replaced. Why isn't there such an indicator on my MSA safety helmet ?

We believe **this type of indicator is extremely misleading** and can create dangerous situations. Such a device is only measuring the exposure to UV but cannot provide valuable information on the actual condition of the helmet.

Because we use UV stabilised, high quality materials to build our helmets, the influence of UV is very limited on the actual condition of the helmet (compared to exposure to pollution, chemical products, extreme temperature, etc.)

The only way to check the condition of a safety helmet is to carefully inspect it as mentioned above.

• I have a suspension from another manufacturer, can I use it with my MSA safety helmet ?

Never attempt to interchange suspensions from one hat manufacturer to another. There is no approved cross-combination between shells from one manufacturer and suspension from another, and in most cases, the suspension tabs will not fit on the shell. Use only genuine MSA replacement parts with your MSA Safety helmet.

• How does the colour and shape of MSA helmets affect the body temperature of the wearer ?

We do not know of any official studies relating to the shape or colour and heat. Generally darker colour helmets absorb more heat than lighter colours, but this can be affected by a variety of environmental conditions.

However, tests made internally show that the difference of temperature elevation of the head is very limited (< 1°C) between a dark helmet (black) and a white helmet.

If the helmet is to be used in a very warm and sunny environment, use a vented version of the shell, as long as it is compatible with the risk analysis, ie that the wearer is not exposed to electrical hazard or potentially harmful projections.

This will offer the wearer a higher comfort thanks to better air circulation.

• What are the dielectric markings on the MSA helmets ? What does 440Vac mean ? Why isn't there a 1000V marking as on some other helmets available on the market ?

First, only helmets with non vented shell provide electrical insulation. When an electrical risk is identified, make sure your helmet shell is not vented.

The 440 VAC marking refers to the EN397 optional electrical requirement, corresponding to tests carried out with 1200 V voltage (please refer to the EN397 testing procedures).

This test is a **current leakage** test performed in 3 different conditions to ensure there is no risk of the electrical current being transmitted to the wearer in case a powered wire is in contact with the helmet.

The voltage used for this test is actually 1200 V AC.

A 1000V marking refers to a specific German standard (VDE) which used to be applied before the EN397 standard was implemented in 1995.

The test is actually less restrictive than the EN397 electrical test, based on a lower voltage.

This VDE marking should not be used any longer due to the enforcement of EN397.

Make sure that your helmet is approved to the EN397 electrical optional requirement if you are to use it in a hazardous electrical environment.

• **What if I need to drill into my Safety helmet to attach hearing protection manufactured by a company other than MSA ?**

Never drill a hole into your safety helmet as it will alter its protection level (mechanical, electrical, etc.)

Before selecting the ear muffs to be mounted on the helmet, **check whether the combination has been approved** according to the relevant EN standard (EN352-2 for helmet mounted ear muffs).

An inappropriate combination may result in lower noise attenuation value, thus reducing the level of protection provided by the ear muffs.

If the combination is valid, the ear muffs will be mounted using the 30 mm slots on the helmet, with a proper set of adaptors provided by the ear muffs vendor for this particular type of helmet.

• **Can I paint my MSA Safety helmet ?**

MSA recommends that you do not paint a V-Gard helmet.

Paint may attack and damage the helmet shell, thereby reducing the degree of protection originally provided.

• **Can I use stickers or tape on MSA Safety helmets ?**

It is permissible to use pressure-sensitive stickers or tape with self-adhesive water based backing as long as they are not closer than 10 mm from the edge of the helmet and are not located in the upper part of the helmet shell (not on the top or the V for instance).

According to MSA's testing, such stickers or tape in such locations will not affect the burnthrough (i.e. dielectric classification) or the structure of an MSA helmet.

However, because it is impossible for us to test all pressure-sensitive adhesives, caution should still be taken when making use of such materials.

Please check the specifications of the glue and make sure they do not include any aggressive solvents which could progressively damage the thermoplastic material of the shell (HDPE, ABS).

Also, be sure that when these materials are applied, they do not cover up any damage on the helmet.

Consult MSA for high visibility stickers as we offer several shapes and colours perfectly suited (and approved) for our industrial safety helmets.

• **Can I put anything in the space between the V-Gard shell and suspension ?**

Items such as gloves, towels, earplugs should never be stored between the suspension and the shell liner.

This space is needed when the shell liner/suspension absorbs the energy of an impact. Objects in this space can transmit large forces to the head and neck, potentially resulting in serious injury or death.