

Falls from Heights

When working at heights six feet and above, workers are at risk for serious injury if a fall occurs. According to OSHA, each year in the U.S. more than 200 construction workers are killed and over 10,000 are seriously injured by falls.

When it comes to staying safe, proper planning, training and equipment are key. Plan how the job will get done, what tasks will be involved and what safety equipment is needed. Train workers in hazard recognition, the care of and safe use of ladders, scaffolding, fall protection systems and any other equipment they may use on the job. Provide the right equipment for the job at hand and ensure it is well maintained.



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© October 2017

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Learning About Ladders

From step to portable and fixed, ladders come in all shapes, sizes and materials. The good news is, the following safety tips apply to any type of ladder.

- Use the correct ladder for the job and visually inspect for any defects before use.
- Erect the ladder at the correct angle.
- Secure the ladder at the top.
- Ladders should extend a minimum of 36" above the top landing.
- Avoid over-reaching by positioning the ladder close to your work.
- Protect the base of any ladder to prevent pedestrians or autos from bumping into it.
- Do not work off of ladders on uneven ground without securing the bottom of the ladder.
- Never attempt to move a ladder while standing on it.
- Wear shoes with non-slip soles when working on a ladder.
- Face the ladder with your body centered between the rails when climbing up and down.
- Use at least one hand to grasp the ladder when climbing.
- Do not carry heavy or oversized items that could cause you to lose your balance.
- Keep the weather in mind, do not work on a ladder in strong wind or storms.
- Store ladders safely when not in use and at the end of the day.

Stairway Safety

Falls from stairways can be serious, leading to injury and even death. Fortunately, most falls can be prevented by installing proper handrails. Handrails should be smooth, easy to grip and be available on both sides of the stairway.

Other tips for creating a safer stairway include:

- Cover stairs with a non-slip surface such as rubber or special slip-resistant paint.
- If painting stairs, use matte finishes on treads to avoid glare.
- Avoid patterned carpeting on stairs that may make it difficult to judge depth.
- Ensure stairways are well-lit.
- Keep stairways free of clutter.
- Follow a regular maintenance schedule to keep stairs in good condition and hazard free.
- Be aware of stairways that may be subject to changing weather (rain, snow, ice, etc.).

When you are on the stairs, keep the following in mind:

- Do not carry heavy or large objects that require both hands or block your vision.
- Avoid distractions while on the stairs including talking on the phone or texting.
- Untied shoelaces or pants that are too long can create tripping hazards.
- Only take one step at a time and use the handrail.
- Avoid stepping on the very end of the stair tread; instead be sure to make use of the full tread to help you balance.

More Tips to Help You Safely Reach New Heights

Workers should wear a personal fall arrest system to avoid possible injury when working at heights greater than six feet, such as rooftops, ladders, and walls.

- Guard or cover all holes, openings and skylights.
- Construct all floor hole covers so they will effectively support two times the weight of employees, equipment and materials that may be imposed on them at any time.
- Scaffolding should be fully planked.
- Do not stand on guardrails.
- Do not use a ladder on top of a scaffold.
- Hard hats should be worn to prevent head injuries.
- Equipment must be properly maintained and regularly inspected.
- Any damaged or defective equipment should be tagged and removed from use.

Resources

Fall prevention resources are available and new training and education is offered regularly. The following websites can offer valuable information:

www.stopconstructionfalls.com

www.osha.gov/stopfalls

