



Fall Protection Toolbox Talk

Falls are a leading cause of serious injuries and fatalities that occur in the workplace. According to statistics published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 887 workers died as a result of a fall in 2017. The construction industry in particular experiences a large number of these fatalities from falls.

What Causes Falls in the Workplace?

The risk for falls is virtually present in every single workplace, however, the factors that can lead to a fall varies greatly. There are many specific unsafe acts by employees as well as unsafe conditions that lead to fall incidents. Falls often result from a series of contributing factors. They are often the result of multiple unsafe conditions and unsafe actions combined. Because of this fact, it is important to look at unsafe conditions as well as unsafe actions to recognize hazardous situations when working at heights.

Unsafe Conditions that Lead to Falls

- Unguarded leading edges
- Open holes
- Improper guardrails
- Damaged equipment (ladders, stairs, safety equipment, etc.)
- Slippery conditions
- Unmarked elevation changes

Unsafe Actions that Lead to Falls

- Working at heights without fall protection or fall prevention methods in place
- Improper use of ladders
- Leaning over guardrails

Best Practices to Avoid Falls in the Workplace

The best way to avoid falls is by eliminating work tasks that require working at heights in the first place. Obviously elimination is not always possible so the risk of falling has to be mitigated through safeguards.

- Engineering controls such as physical barriers and guardrails are two fall protection systems that are effective in preventing falls from heights.
- Using a proper fall arrest system such as a full body harness, self-retracting lanyard, and approved anchor point with 100% tie-off is another way to prevent or mitigate the consequences of a fall.
- Proper use of **ladders**. This includes using three points of contact when climbing, not leaning to one side while on the ladder, setting the ladder at the proper angle, securing the ladder, etc.



- Proper housekeeping in work areas is important in preventing falls at the same level as well as falls from heights.
- Warning signs and other methods of communicating fall hazards to nearby workers.

Summary

There are many factors that can cause or contribute to a fall occurring in the workplace. Unsafe conditions paired with unsafe actions of workers while working at heights is a recipe for disaster. Do not put yourself or another worker in a position where an injury due to a fall can occur.

Discussion points:

1. What work tasks could result in a fall injury at our worksite?
2. What fall protection methods can we use to prevent falls during these high-risk work tasks?