

Falls to Lower Levels

A fall to a lower level is considered falling from one elevation to another, regardless of distance. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of fatal falls in 2007 rose 39% since 1992. In construction fatal falls most often result from: roofs – including through roofs or roof openings, scaffolds, ladders, structural steel, and non-moving vehicles. Non-fatal falls result from ladders, scaffolds, unclassified falls, roofs – including through roofs and roof openings, non-moving vehicles, stairs and steps.

Recommendations for Fall Prevention

General:

- Incorporate all aspects of safety while in the planning phase of a project.
- Train employees on hazard recognition and regulations.
- Provide the appropriate fall protection equipment for the hazards involved. Be available to recommend alternate methods or equipment where necessary.
- Train workers on the proper use and care of fall protection they will be using. Be sure that they inspect their equipment daily.

Falls from Ladders:

- Train employees on how to select and use the right type of ladder for the job and safe use of that ladder.
- Instruct workers to inspect the ladder before each use for any structural damage, missing or damaged parts, and any substances that could cause slips or falls.
- Instruct workers not to paint or apply stickers to ladders. They must be able to properly see the structure in order to inspect it.
- Use ladders only as recommended by the manufacturer (do not use a stepladder closed up as an extension ladder, do not overload, do not work from the top rung, etc).
- Set up a regular schedule for ladder maintenance.

Falls from Scaffolds:

- Be sure the right type of scaffold is used for the job.
- Access ladders must be provided.
- Scaffold grade lumber must be used for all platforms.
- Install guardrails and toeboards on all open sides of the platform when it is 10 feet or more from the surface.
- Mud sills should be set up on a stable and level surface.
- A qualified person should inspect the scaffold before each use.
- Take into consideration the weather before using a scaffold. Build-up of fall leaves, ice, or rain may make the working surface unsafe in the current condition.
- Train workers on safe use of scaffolds.

Falls from Roofs and Buildings:

- Guarding and/or fall protection should be on all roof openings.
- Use warning signs on roof openings.
- Cutting openings in the roof should be one of the last aspects of construction.
- Unguarded roof perimeters and balconies should be protected.
- Roof and floor openings should be securely covered with material capable of supporting the maximum intended load and should be labeled "HOLE".