

Avoid Falls

Week Number 12 (March 19 - 25)

Everyone working on construction jobs must be alert to the hazards that can cause falls. If hazards are discovered, they should be reported to a supervisor and immediate action should be taken to eliminate them.

The following are some hazards that cause the majority of falls in the construction industry:

- Poor housekeeping includes slippery floors, debris, materials, tools, and equipment scattered over the floor. Slippery floors caused by oil or grease spills should always be cleaned up immediately. Tools and materials should be stored in a box or placed out of the way when not in use. Debris should be disposed of in a proper receptacle.
- Temporary handrails and barricade rails should always be placed on stairs. Failure to use a handrail can result in a serious fall. Worn or broken treads on stairs are also hazardous. Never store tools or materials on stairways. A step or change in elevation that is 19" or more requires a stair, ladder, or ramp.
- Floor openings and pits should always be barricaded or covered with planking that is securely fastened and identified.
- Ladder rails and rungs must always be of the proper design, material and size. A ladder should never be used if the rails are cracked, or the rungs are missing or broken. Ladders should always extend 36 inches above the upper landing. Long ladders must be braced at intermediate points. Do not use a step ladder like an extension ladder.
- The proper slope of a ladder is essential for maximum safety. The base of a ladder should be set away from the wall or structure at a distance of one-fourth the height of the ladder. Always make sure the ladder is solidly set before climbing it.
- Always maintain three points of contact when climbing a ladder. That is, no more than one hand or foot should be off the ladder in movement at any given time. Keep a hoist line for tools and materials instead of trying to carry them up. Always face the ladder ascending or descending it.
- Make sure scaffolding is erected and used in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. Proper seating and locking of all connections is extremely important. Where required, scaffolds that are more than four feet high shall have toe boards and guardrails installed.
- Most falls occur on the walking surface. Pay attention to where you are walking and keep walkways clear for easy travel.