

Falls in the Construction Industry

Educate your teams on the different kinds of falls that can happen on the jobsite and learn how to prevent them.

Falls in Construction

In 2018, OSHA published its [Fatal Four top causes of construction fatalities](#), citing falls as number one. Falls are a leading cause of injury and death for construction workers.

Let's review some important best practices you can use today to help prevent falls at your jobsite.

Falls from a height

Falls on the job site come in two categories: falls from a height and falls to the same level.

All falls from any elevation above ground level are considered falls from a height, and all work above six feet off the ground is considered working from a height. Falls in this category can include falls from:

- Roof tops
- Scaffolding
- Stilts
- Cherry pickers
- Ladders
- Drilling platforms
- Stairs
- Shelving

Falls to the same level

[Falls to the same level](#) are typically [slips and trips](#) that occur at the level the individual is walking, with no height difference. While there is less risk of fatality in this category, major and sometimes permanent injuries can be the result of a fall to the same level.

Falls to the same level can be caused by:

- Spills
- Unlevel grades
- Slick surfaces
- Improper footwear
- [Electrical cords](#)
- Improper stairs
- Obstructions
- Poor lighting

How to plan for safer work on the jobsite

Make your work plan ahead of time. This is especially important for tasks at heights, with their increased risks.

By planning ahead of time, we make safety a priority. Determine the resources and protective measures you will need to perform the work safely. This includes:

- Equipment
- Personnel
- Tools
- Weather conditions
- Lighting
- Safety lines
- Rails
- Scaffolds
- Cherry pickers
- [PPE](#)

Make sure you have the safety training you need before starting work on your tasks. Plan on reviewing proper use of the equipment and safety gear you'll be using ahead of the task to keep the necessary procedures top of mind.

Balancing excessive weight on ladders, stilts, and scaffolds is a risky business. Elevation changes the worker's center of gravity and may affect their balance. The additional weight in shingles, lumber, drywall mud, paint, or other materials they may be holding increases the amount of effort needed to stabilize themselves above ground.

Be flexible for safety

Weather and lighting conditions can change quickly, and power could go off unexpectedly. There are ideal conditions for working from heights, and there are conditions that are less than ideal.

Don't attempt to work when conditions are poor or you are tired, sick, or distracted. Be alert and prepared to halt work and correct an unsafe situation or reschedule for another day, when safer conditions resume.

How to ensure a safer jobsite

All necessary safety gear needs to be onsite and easily accessible for every task that is six feet or more above the grade or platform. Allocate enough time per task for workers to properly equip their safety gear and make sure all required safeguards are in place prior to beginning the work.

Survey the surface of the work area as well as the surface of the area below. Make sure elevated work surfaces are:

- Level
- Stable
- Clear of debris
- Grippy
- Proper size

Do not compromise when it comes to making scaffolds, ladders, and decks level and stable. Help employees learn the proper way to set up ladders and scaffolds, and make sure they understand unsafe or risky behaviors. For example, many falls from ladders and scaffolds occur when someone overreaches from a ladder, when the safest thing to do is reposition the ladder closer to the target.

Regularly check safety gear and essential equipment

Nothing lasts forever, and even ladders wear out. All of your jobsite equipment that is regularly set up, torn down, transported, and set up again should be inspected each time it is used to prevent failure and injury.

Be aware of weight limits

Scaffolds, ladders, lifelines, and all equipment for working at a height all have specified weight limits to work within. If a ladder has a 250 lb. weight limit, that

weight limit should be strictly observed. if workers use the ladder over the ladder capacity, it can lead to premature failure and possible injury. If you need a ladder with a higher weight limit, get the right tool for the job.

Scaffold frames and platforms need to be evaluated consistently for cracks and breakage.