

Before you begin

- Become familiar with the fall hazards in your workplace and the key differences between fall prevention and fall protection.
- Review your company's written fall protection program and policies.
- Review the following Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards.
 - 29CFR1910 Subpart D, Walking, Working Surfaces Standard
 - 29CFR1910.140, Personal Protection Equipment Standard



Introduction

Fall injuries in the workplace account for a considerable amount of workers' compensation and medical costs. Falls cost around \$70 billion annually in the U.S., according to the National Safety Council and around \$130 million in Ohio alone, according to BWC statistics. We should work to eliminate falls both on and off the clock. Falls at home are the third-leading cause of death from unintentional injuries.

Survey your workplace to determine areas that could result in a fall. Look for areas that are poorly lit, have slippery surfaces and objects such as hoses, cords, and trash. Determine steps to take to control and eliminate these potential causes for falls.

To reduce fall hazards, we should make every effort to remove objects that can lead to someone's fall whether it involves cleaning up a spill or picking up an inadvertently dropped item.

Definitions

Fall prevention equipment prevents a fall from occurring. Examples include handrails on a stairway, guardrails on a platform, and covers over floor openings. Fall prevention also consists of removing hazards that contribute to falls, such as objects placed in aisles or uneven floors.

Fall protection is personal protective equipment which, once a fall takes place, should keep the wearer from striking and falling to a lower level. It includes a harness, lanyard, and anchor point. Belts are not acceptable except when used as a positioning device or restraint.

Discussion

When using fall protection. It is important to train employees to understand the ABCDs.

- **Anchor points** – secure attachments
- **Body support/harness** – full body harness
- **Connectors/lanyards** – device used to attach to anchor, basic types include:
 - o Restraint.
 - o Shock-absorbing.
 - o Self-retracting.
- **Decent/rescue** – safely retrieving employee when a fall occurs

For those who need to work on elevated surfaces:

- Use standard guardrails for any work done at or above 4 feet.
- Maintain and repair bases and railings of portable stairways, ladders, and scaffolds.
- Use scissor lifts with guardrails. For an added protective measure, users can incorporate a full body harness and lanyard attached to the manufacturer's engineered anchor point.
- For other lifts, such as boom lifts, a full body harness and lanyard connected to the manufacturer's engineered anchor point is always required.
- Firmly attach engineered lift truck safety cages to the mast, have a solid floor and standard guardrails. Do not perform work outside the railing.
- Order pickers should use the manufacturer's provided equipment and remain within the platform provided. Any deviation will violate company policy.
- Users of all lifts are not permitted to climb while inside the basket and will always keep their feet on the deck.
- For work performed on low-sloped roofs less than 6 feet from the edge.
 - o Employers will implement work rules that protect workers from falling by using guardrails, safety nets, fall restraint, or fall arrest.
 - o The employer can implement designated areas when performing work that is both infrequent and temporary and performed more than 6 feet from the unprotected side or edge.
- Inspect the workplace regularly for fall hazards such as: cords, hoses, floor openings, and wet/slippery surfaces.
- Use safe work practices while workers are on ladders, following the manufacturer's specifications.
- Regularly inspect stairwells for adequate lighting, guardrails/handrails, and cleanliness.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive inspection program, following the manufacturer's guidelines for all fall prevention/protection equipment.

Conclusion

We need to recognize fall injuries can happen to anyone at our facility; this includes the entire employee population, customers, suppliers, vendors, and contractors. Control and elimination of fall hazards should be everyone's mission. Maintaining a strong effort on good housekeeping will help prevent slips, trips, and falls.

Active participation and involvement can prevent falls. Please take a moment to correct any hazards you observe. Don't leave it for someone else. Point out situations that may need supervisory action. Simply put, "Do what's right!"

Finally, look at your work areas and procedures to identify opportunities for improving fall prevention and protection. Examples include:

- Relocating extension cords so they don't cross aisles.
- Submitting a work order for lighting a stairwell.
- Removing a pallet from a walkway.
- Implementing guardrails where appropriate.
- Planning and conducting fall protection training.

Group activity

Divide falls into those that take place on the same level or onto a lower level. Ask the group to cite sources of falls on the same level. Encourage them to list the types of incidents that they've witnessed or experienced.

Next, list causes for falls. Answers may include conditions such as:

- Poor lighting.
- Slippery surfaces, wet, oily, icy.
- Hoses, cords, trash, cluttered aisles.
- Granular or powdered material.
- Footwear.
- Uneven surfaces (such as cracks or holes).

Ask for examples of how falls to a lower level could occur. Answers might include:

- Reaching too far on a ladder.
- Standing on a ladder that slides out from its base.
- Falling from a stairway.
- Falling from a platform or scaffold.
- Falling through floor and roof openings.
- Falling from trucks and trailers.
- Losing your balance while standing on a box or chair.
- Jumping down vs. three-point system. ('Three points' means both feet and at least one hand, or both hands and at least one foot, are in contact with the ladder, stairway, or platform to prevent falling while descending or ascending.)

Resources

[Ohio Administrative Code 4123:1-5-02](#) - Guarding floor and wall openings and holes

[OSHA 29 CFR 1910 Subparts D](#) - Walking-Working Surfaces

[OSHA 29 CFR 1910 Subpart I](#) (1910.140) - Personal Protective Equipment

[OSHA How to Protect Workers from Falls](#)

[OSHA Fall Prevention Training Guide](#)

[NIOSH Topic Page – Falls in the Workplace](#)