

Team Safety Talks: Fall Protection Requirements

Company Name _____ Job Name _____ Date _____

If today follows the usual pattern for a typical day in the construction industry, three workers will be absent today because they are dead, and 16,000 others will not show up because they have been injured on the job, according to past Secretary of Labor Robert Reich when he announced revised standards for fall protection. Although construction workers make up only about 5 percent of the U. S. workforce, the industry accounts for 17 percent of all job related fatalities with about 21 percent of those fatalities a result of falls. Other studies indicate the actual injury and fatality rates could be as much as two times higher due to differences in the way injuries are recorded. OSHA regulations for fall protection apply to all employers in the construction industry including general building, heavy construction and specialty trade contractors. Other employers are covered by similar requirements included in the General Industry Safety Orders. Some of the highlights of OSHA construction standards are:

- Requires a uniform threshold height of *six feet* for providing consistent fall protection. The only permitted exceptions are for employees making an inspection, investigation, or assessment prior to the start of actual construction work, or after all of the construction work has been completed. Protection can generally be provided through the use of guardrails, safety nets, or fall arrest systems. If none of these protection systems is feasible, employers must develop and implement written alternative fall protection plans.
- Prohibits the use of body belts as part of the fall arrest system in favor of a body harness system. This is based on studies indicating persons suspended in body belts often suffer severe internal injuries and cannot tolerate suspension long enough to allow for rescue. The use of non-locking type snap hooks in personal fall arrest systems and positioning systems is prohibited.
- In some cases the establishment of a warning line six feet back from the unprotected edge is permitted if other measures are infeasible or create a greater hazard. However, any work outside of this area is defined as a controlled access zone which requires the presence of a competent safety monitor with no other responsibilities than to warn employees of impending fall hazards, or other unsafe conditions, if fall arrest systems are not employed in the controlled access zone.
- Requires a training program for every employee that might be exposed to fall hazards. Required training includes the nature of the fall hazards in the work area, and the correct procedures for inspecting, maintaining, and disassembling the fall protection systems used. Training is also required on the use and operation of guardrail systems, fall arrest systems, the role of safety monitors (if used), the handling and storing of equipment, and a number of other requirements. Written certification of all required training must be maintained by each employer. Retraining is required if any changes occur in the workplace, or if it appears that the employee has not retained the knowledge and skill necessary to properly use fall protection equipment.

Safety Recommendations: _____

Job Specific Topics: _____

S.D.S Reviewed: _____

Attended By: _____

