



Reducing the risk of accidental falls from heights

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A set of stringent safeguards and precautions that can reduce the risk of accidents at the workplace, for workers at great heights.

Overview

Falls from height are one of the biggest causes of workplace fatalities and major injuries. Common causes are falls from ladders and through fragile roofs.

No matter the industry, business, or location, it is hard to imagine a work place that does not have the need for people to work at heights from time to time.

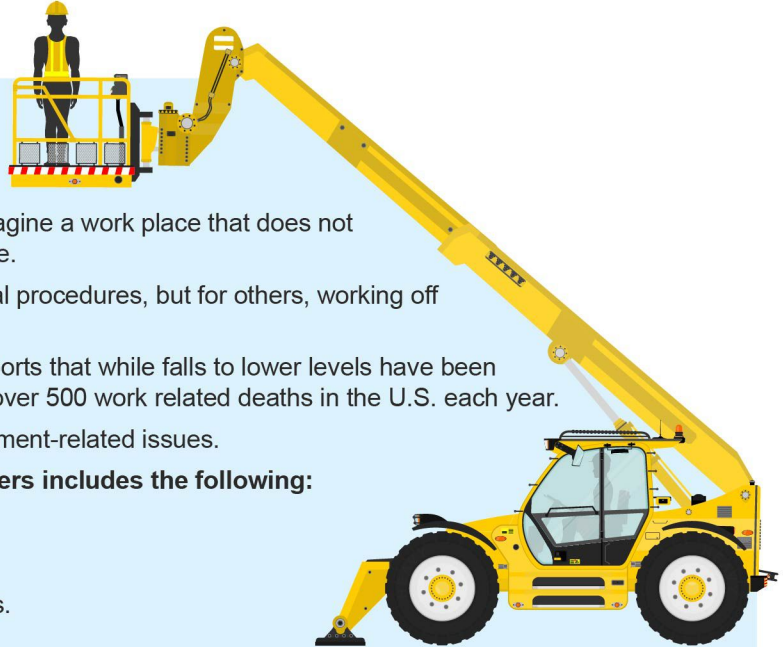
For some, the activity may be a rare incidental part of normal procedures, but for others, working off the ground is how normal operations are carried out.

The National Safety Council's Injury Facts, 2013 edition, reports that while falls to lower levels have been improving steadily since 2007, they are still responsible for over 500 work related deaths in the U.S. each year.

Controlling falls requires addressing site, human, and equipment-related issues.

Providing effective fall protection for construction workers includes the following:

- Identifying and assessing the fall hazard.
- Selecting appropriate fall protection.
- Properly constructing, installing and implementing controls.
- Establishing and enforcing safe work procedures.
- Training workers in the use and maintenance of the fall protection system.



Ladders



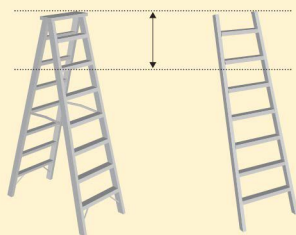
Check for damaged rungs or siderails and loose, broken, or bent hardware. Also check the condition of extension ladder ropes, pulleys and locking system.



Always erect the ladder on a solid level surface. Do not put ladders on top of boxes, barrels or other unstable objects.



Secure the ladder base and protect it from traffic and moving objects.



Open stepladders fully and lock the spreader. All feet should contact a level supporting surface.

Stay off the top two rungs of a straight or extension ladder and the top step and cap of a stepladder (see the figure).



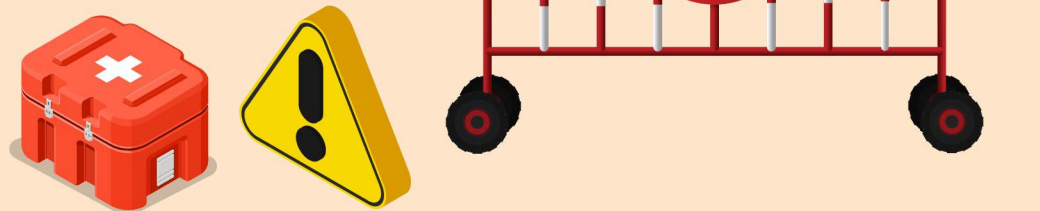
Always face the ladder and use both hands while climbing up and down.

Use the Three-Point Technique: move one hand or foot at a time.

Carry tools in your pocket or in a toolbelt, or hoist them on a hand line.

Safety Tips

- Eliminate the risk by permanent covers, lowering the work, changing the process, or otherwise reconfiguring the work.
- Employ passive fall protection, such as guardrails or temporarily covered floor openings.
- Use active fall restraint system (tethered work) where the worker is tied by lanyard to a fixed anchorage point.
- Use a fall arrest system designed to stop the fall without the authorized worker being injured.
- Employ work practices such as an awareness system using signals or warnings.
- Take account of weather conditions that could compromise worker safety.
- Check that the place (e.g. a roof) where work at height is to be undertaken is safe. Each place where people will work at height needs to be checked every time, before use.
- Stop materials or objects from falling or, if it is not reasonably practicable to prevent objects falling, take suitable and sufficient measures to make sure no one can be injured, e.g. use exclusion zones to keep people away or mesh on scaffold to stop materials such as bricks falling off.
- Store materials and objects safely so they won't cause injury if they are disturbed or collapse.
- Plan for emergencies and rescue, e.g. agree a set procedure for evacuation. Think about foreseeable situations and make sure employees know the emergency procedures. Don't just rely entirely on the emergency services for rescue in your plan.



Trivia

According to findings in recent studies, inclination angle is a critical parameter affecting the friction requirement at the bottom of a straight ladder. The American National Standard ANSI A14. 2-2000 recommends a 4:1 ratio (75.5 degree angle). Most ladder users, however, have no way to measure the angle of their ladder. Results of the other studies showed that when asked to set a ladder at 75 degrees without a measurement device, the resulting angle varied from 67.3 to 76.2. The data also suggests the importance of climbing speed with respect to safety during straight ladder use. It is critical that users not rush when climbing a ladder.



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