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Falls in the Construction Industry

Falls from heights are one of the leading causes of injuries and fatalities.

If today is a typical day in the construction industry across the US, one to three workers will die as a result of a fall in the workplace. There will be more than 500 serious injuries as a result of these falls.

Falls from ladders, scaffolds, through shaft ways, openings or at leading edges.

The standards set by OSHA for protecting workers from falls in the construction industry are some of the most commonly violated standards in the workplace. More work needs to be done by employers to ensure workers are protected while working at heights.

Fall Prevention Through Plan, Provide, and Train:

OSHA uses a “plan, provide, and train” model in its fall prevention campaign, which is a straightforward way to prevent falls in the workplace.

Plan– Plan work tasks ahead of time. Planning work tasks is especially important for high-hazard tasks such as working at heights. First, look at eliminating any work at heights if possible. If elimination is not possible, then plan what you will need to perform the work at heights. Plan out what equipment, tools, personnel, and materials you will need. After looking at these items, look at what safety equipment, PPE, and training will be needed to complete the task safely.

Provide- Provide all necessary safety equipment and PPE when the work height exceeds six feet and engineering controls such as guardrails are not in place. Outside of equipment and PPE, it provides the employees with the proper amount of time it takes to set up the job as well as completing the work.

Train- Properly train employees not only to know how to use the safety equipment that is provided but also in hazard recognition. It is important that the employees are able to recognize hazards and understand how to properly address them before starting or continuing work. Train employees to first think about how to eliminate dangerous work tasks or the hazards that accompany working at heights.

Summary:

Compliance with OSHA standards should only be the start of working at heights safely.

Following a well-thought-out plan, providing all the necessary resources, and training employees can help to prevent injuries and fatalities due to falls.