8 Components of a Fall Protection Plan



A well-developed and implemented fall protection plan for working at heights will keep workers safe. Here are eight components of a well-developed fall protection plan.

Step 1: Perform a Hazard Assessment

The first step in creating a fall protection plan is to identify all fall hazards in the work area. Hazards include falls from ladders, a roof, scaffold, stairs, structural steel and falls through a floor or roof opening or roof surface not strong enough to support the weight of a worker.

Step 2: Determine How/Where Fall Protection will be Used and Type of Equipment Needed

Fall protection applications, or how and where protection will be used, include fall arrest, fall restraint, work positioning, and confined space or confined space rescue/general rescue.

Choices for types of equipment include a full body harness and lanyard, self-retracting lanyards, horizontal lifelines, guardrails, and anchorage points. Anchorage points can be built into a structure or may need to be created or attached to a structure. This can be done using a variety of roof anchors, trolley anchors, sliding anchors and anchors and guardrails designed specifically for use with trench boxes.

Step 3: Establish Procedures for Assembly, Maintenance, Inspection, and Disassembly

Follow manufacturer instructions and recommended procedures for assembly and disassembly of fall protection equipment. Have this process written in your fall protection plan along with a process for tagging, removal, and disposal or repair of damaged equipment.

Link to: Inspection Form, Fall Protection Equipment Safety Harness Inspection Checklist/Log.

Step 4: Rescue Plan

A plan for the rescue and recovery of fallen workers must be included in a fall protection plan. Employers are responsible to provide for prompt rescue of employees or self-rescue (if able) in the event of a fall. If employees are not rescued in a timely manner, they can experience serious injuries related to suspension trauma.

Step 5: Use and Storage of Equipment

Fall protection equipment can become damaged with rust, corrosion, discoloration, and deformation if it’s not used correctly and cared for and stored properly. It then becomes unsafe to use. Storage will be unique to each jobsite but best practice and fall protection manufacturer guidelines are the same – avoid heat, moisture, and chemicals when storing equipment.

Step 6: Get Specific

Every job and every work site are different, many are constantly changing. It’s important to perform a hazard assessment at each jobsite initially and then periodically to identify hazards and make changes to the fall protection plan as needed.

Step 7: Training

Train and educate new and current employees on the proper use of fall protection devices before they use them. All employees must be trained on fall protection plan requirements before going to into fall hazard areas. Prior to permitting employees into areas where fall hazards exist, all employees must also be trained regarding fall protection plan requirements.

Step 8: Availability

Review your written fall protection plan before work begins on any jobsite. Pass around a sign-in sheet for employees to sign saying they have been trained in and understand the fall protection plan. Keep documentation of what you covered in the training too. Follow up training with daily pre-job talks, pre-task meetings for particularly complex or dangerous work, and regular safety meetings.