Don’t Leave Your Safety Up in the Air: Protect Against Falls from Heights

What’s at Stake?

Working at heights without fall protection is irresponsible and dangerous. You could end up getting yourself killed or injuring or killing someone else. In fact, thousands of workplace injuries and deaths could be prevented each year by wearing fall protection.

What’s the Danger?

How many unsafe activities and conditions do you see in this photo? The one that stands out the most is the total lack of fall protection and regard for personal safety this worker is demonstrating

Most workplace deaths and serious fall-related injuries happen because of falls from heights.

How to Protect Yourself

4 Ways to Stop Falls from Heights

1. **Always use fall protection when working at heights.**

Employees working at heights 6 feet/3 meters or more, must use fall protection—guardrails, safety nets, or personal fall arrest system.

You want to choose a harness, lanyard and connectors that will either stop you from falling, such as a positioning device, or arrest your fall, i.e. a shockabsorbing lanyard.

2. **Choose your lanyard wisely.**

Think about the total fall distance when selecting a lanyard and anchor point. Lanyards must limit free fall to no more than 6-feet and 1,800 pounds of force.

To do this, always select the shortest possible lanyard. Using a longer lanyard will lead to a longer fall and more force on your body upon impact. How much

force? A 200-pound worker falling 10-feet is subject to 8,000 pounds of force on impact.

3. **Use a Solid Anchorage Point.**

Anchor points literally anchor you and your protective equipment to the structure you're working from in the event of a fall. You want to choose ones that will support you if you fall, be high enough to prevent you from hitting the ground if your lanyard deploys, and will prevent you from slamming into other structures as you swing and dangle after falling.

Anchor points for vertical lifelines or lanyards must be able to hold 5,000 pounds of force. Guardrails and conduit DO NOT make safe anchor points.

Each worker must be attached to a separate vertical lifeline. The buddy system doesn't apply here.

4. **Deal with Damaged Equipment**

First, inspect all equipment prior to each use. Look for frays in the webbing, burns, chemical damage, and other signs of wear and tear.

Next, check your connectors. It should take two actions to open a snap hook or carabiner, not just a single click and push. This prevents the lanyard from rolling out of the hook in a fall. Do not use equipment that is damaged.

NEVER use fall protection equipment that has been in a fall. If your harness or lanyard have been in a fall, report the fall to your supervisor and turn in your equipment.

Finally, look to see if guardrails, ladder cages, safety nets and hole covers are in place and secure. Report any issues to your supervisor right away.

Final Word

Don't leave your safety up in the air! Wear the right fall protection whenever you are working from heights!