



Fall Protection

According to OSHA, falls are the leading cause of accidents in the construction industry. While most of us do not work directly on construction sites, it's important to know how to protect yourself from the types of falls that can exist at a workplace. These range from unprotected edges to holes in the ground.

To determine if any fall hazards exist at your workplace, your employer is required to perform a hazard assessment. During the assessment your employer looks for:

- Unprotected edges
- Holes

Your supervisor also determines whether work surfaces can support employees safely.

If fall hazards are present, your employer must establish preventative measures so that the chance of having a fall is minimized. Preventative measures must be used if:

- There is the potential for a fall of six feet or more
- There is the potential to fall into machinery or equipment

Types of Fall Protection

There are many types of fall protection including guardrails and personal fall arrest systems. Guardrails are put in place by the company. A personal fall arrest system must be worn by an individual.

Guardrails

Guardrails are used to prevent people from falling to a lower level. They are used in places where there is the potential for a fall of six feet or more. Guardrails consist of a

- Handrail
- Mid-rail
- Toe board

The toe board is located at the bottom of the guardrail and is used to prevent working materials, such as tools, from falling to a lower level.

To stay safe, do not use the guardrails improperly:

- Do not climb on guardrails
- Do not push against or pull guardrails

If you notice that any guardrails are broken or damaged, talk to your supervisor immediately.

Personal Fall Arrest System

A personal fall arrest system consists of a body harness and a lanyard. The lanyard is designed so that a person cannot free fall more than 6 feet. In addition, the deceleration distance, or the total distance it takes to stop falling, is 3 ½ feet. This means that the area where a fall can occur should be large enough to accommodate the employee and the length of the lanyard.

You must always wear a harness and lanyard if you operate a boom lift. Be sure you wear this equipment properly and that it fits snugly.

To ensure your safety, you must inspect your harness and lanyard before each use. When checking the harness:

- Inspect the webbing for frayed edges, burn marks, cuts, deterioration and any other types of damage
- Ensure all stitching is intact
- Check the buckle for cracks, distortion, or other damage
- Make sure the buckle connects properly and won't slip

When checking the lanyard:

- Inspect the entire length
- Look for cuts, knots, burns or other damage
- Check for broken, cut and worn fibers

Do not use broken or damaged equipment or use equipment if you feel it's unsafe. If you have any questions about how your harness and lanyard are supposed to look or fit, talk to your supervisor.

Fall protection is used to help keep you safe. Many different types of fall protection exist, from guardrails, to hole covers, to a personal fall arrest system. If you are required to wear fall protection you must do so. If you feel that the type of fall protection you are using is damaged or unsafe to use, talk to your supervisor immediately. Do not use broken or damaged equipment.

If you notice any area in the workplace that can lead to a fall, talk to your supervisor. If you have additional questions about fall protection, call the Risk Manager at (702) 368-6793.

Revision History

Rev.	Date	Change Description & Section	Approver/Contributor/Writer
003	Sept. 30, 2009	Updated revision #; no content change.	Pete Vilotti
002	Sept. 30, 2008	Upped revision #; no content change.	Megan Gesing/Abby Rotstein
001	Dec 10, 2007	Initial Release.	Rene Casas/Libby Craver/Abby Rotstein