



## BIE SAFETY ADVISOR

### **7th Annual National Safety Stand-Down to Prevent Falls in Construction Rescheduled for September 14-18, 2020**

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) announced today that the 7th annual National Stand-Down to Prevent Falls in Construction has been rescheduled for September 14-18, 2020. While OSHA postponed the event earlier this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, employers are encouraged to promote fall safety virtually and/or while employing social distancing practices among small groups.

"This national initiative brings much needed attention to falls, which continue to be the leading cause of fatalities in construction," said Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health Loren Sweatt. Fatalities caused by falls from elevation accounted for 320 of the 1,008 construction fatalities recorded in 2018 (BLS data). Those deaths were preventable.

The national safety stand-down is part of OSHA's fall prevention campaign, and was developed in partnership with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), National Occupational Research Agenda, and The Center for Construction Research and Training.

The Stand-Down provides an opportunity for employers to talk about fall hazards, protective methods, and the company's safety policies, goals, and expectations. Companies can participate by having toolbox talks or other safety activities such as conducting safety inspections of fall protection equipment, developing fall rescue

plans, or discussing job-specific fall hazards.

Extensive resources are available on OSHA's Fall Prevention Stand-Down webpage at <http://www.osha.gov/StopFallsStandDown>.

Resources include:

- A brief video entitled "5 Ways to Prevent Workplace Falls," which encourages employers to educate and train workers on fall protection equipment;
- A series of fall prevention publications, with an emphasis on construction, and fall prevention videos;
- OSHA's Fall Prevention Training Guide, which provides a lesson plan for employers, including several Toolbox Talks; and
- Guidance on ladder and scaffolding safety.

Employers are also encouraged to promote the event by using the #StandDown4Safety on social media, provide feedback after their events, and download a personalized certificate of participation. The certificate pages will be active on September 14<sup>th</sup> at OSHA's and the National Safety Council's (NSC) webpages.

To get an OSHA representative to participate in your Stand-Down contact Region 2 Stand-Down coordinator, James Giarraputo at [Giarraputo.James@dol.gov](mailto:Giarraputo.James@dol.gov) or 201-250-1778. To participate in an event, a list of public events in your area can be found by visiting OSHA's Stand-Down website. These events are free and open to the public.

For more information, visit [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov).



# Monthly Toolbox Talk

## Passive Fall Protection Systems

With few exceptions, OSHA regulations require that you be protected from falls when walking or working 6' or more above a lower level. When most people think of fall protection, they think of personal fall arrest systems; however, there are a couple of fall protection systems that are more effective in protecting you from falls.

## Hierarchy of Fall Protection Controls

1. Eliminate the fall hazard
2. Passive fall protection
3. Fall restraint
4. Fall arrest

## Passive Fall Protection vs. Active Fall Protection

A passive fall protection system is static, fixed, or unmoving. Once installed, passive systems don't require active participation from you in order to provide protection. Except for safety nets, passive fall protection systems prevent you from falling at all. Passive protection systems include barricades, guardrails, hole covers, stair rails, hand rails, and safety nets.

Active fall protection systems, on the other hand, involve active participation by you, are movable, and require the use of special gear. Active fall protection systems include fall arrest and fall restraint. These systems comprise of a body harness, lanyard, an anchor, lifeline, and connectors such as snap hooks.

Today we're going to talk about each of the passive fall protection systems, except safety nets.

## Guardrails

Guardrail systems consist of top rails, midrails, toeboards, and posts.

- The top rails must be smooth-surfaced, capable of withstanding at least 200 pounds of downward or outward force, and 42" (plus or minus 3") above the working/walking surface.
- Midrails must be midway between the top edge of the guardrail system and the walking/working level and capable of withstanding at least 150 pounds of force applied in any direction at any point along the midrail.
- Top rails and midrails must not cause a projection hazard by overhanging the terminal posts.
- Toeboards must be a minimum of 3 1/2" from its top edge to the floor, securely fastened, and not have more than 1/4" clearance above the floor level.
- Guardrail systems must not have rough or jagged surfaces that would cause punctures, lacerations, or snagged clothing.
- Wire rope guardrails must be flagged at 6' intervals and when a force of 200 pounds is applied, it can deflect no more than 3".
- Wire rope guardrails are guardrails, NOT fall arrest tie off points.

## Hole Covers

The fall protection standard (29 CFR §1926.500(b)) defines a hole as "a gap or void 2 inches...or more in its least dimension, in a floor, roof, or other walking/working surface."

Hole Covers must be:

- Strong enough to support at least twice the anticipated weight of workers, equipment and materials that may be imposed.
- Large enough to provide appropriate overlap
- Secured to prevent displacement by wind, equipment, or workers.

- Color coded or clearly marked with "HOLE" or "COVER" to warn of the hazard.

## Stair Rails and Hand Rails

A couple of definitions are needed here. A stair rail is similar to a guardrail in construction and purpose. It is to prevent you from falling off the stairs. A hand rail provides you with support in the event of a slip or trip when using the stairs.

Stairways having four or more risers or those rising more than 30", must have at least one handrail and a stair rail system along each unprotected side or edge. The top edge of the stair rail can serve as a handrail.

Stair rails must not be less than 36" above the tread surface and if serving as a handrail not more than 37" high. Stair rails, like guardrails, must have midrails and posts.

Handrails must not be more than 37" or less than 30" above the tread surface and provide an adequate handhold to grasp.

## Maintenance

Although once installed, passive fall protection systems don't require active participation, they should be inspected periodically to identify deterioration and/or abuse. Any weakened, broken, or removed parts must be repaired or replaced immediately.

## Employee Recommendations:

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