

# Falls from Heights

Millions of people work on construction sites across the nation every day. Despite this, the fatal injury rate for the construction industry is higher than the national average for all industries.

Top hazards for workers in construction include:

- Falls (from heights)
- Trench collapse
- Scaffold collapse
- Electric shock and arc flash/arc blast
- Failure to use proper personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Repetitive motion injuries

## Fall Protection



**Hazard:** Each year, falls consistently account for the greatest number of fatalities in the construction industry. A number of factors are often involved in falls, including unstable working surfaces, misuse or failure to use fall protection equipment and human error. Studies have shown that using guardrails, fall arrest systems, safety nets, covers and restraint systems can prevent many deaths and injuries from falls.

### Solutions:

- Consider using aerial lifts or elevated platforms to provide safer elevated working surfaces.
- Erect guardrail systems with toeboards and warning lines, or install control-line systems to protect workers near the edges of floors and

roofs.

- Cover floor holes.
- Use safety net systems or personal fall arrest systems (body harnesses).

## Ladders

**Hazard:** Ladders and stairways are another source of injuries and fatalities among construction workers. OSHA estimates that there are more than 20,000 injuries and dozens of fatalities each year due to falls on stairways and ladders used in construction. Many of these injuries are serious enough to require time off the job.

### Solutions:

- Use the correct ladder for the task.
- Have a competent person visually inspect a ladder for any defects before use, including:
  - Structural damage, split/bent side rails, broken or missing rungs/steps/cleats and missing or damaged safety devices;
  - Grease, dirt or other contaminants that could cause slips or falls; and
  - Paint or stickers (except warning labels) that could hide possible defects.
- Make sure that ladders are long enough to safely reach the work area.
- Mark or tag damaged or defective ladders with “Do Not Use” for repair or replacement, or destroy them immediately.
- Never load ladders beyond the maximum intended load or beyond the manufacturer’s rated capacity.
- Be sure the load rating can support the weight of the user, including materials and tools.