

Construction safety – falls essay sample



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Construction sites are dangerous, and many accidents can occur. Each day on a work site, construction workers are subject to many tasks and pieces of equipment that can put their lives in danger. Workers are asked to work with heavy equipment and powered vehicles, such as forklifts (Powered vehicles), cranes and other heavy duty equipment, (OSHA, 2010). With all of the activities that occur on a construction site, accidents due to falls are the number one threat to construction workers on a work site, (OSHA, 2010). The U. S. Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) states that falls are the number one cause of construction injuries and deaths, (OSHA, 2010). Falls are the leading cause of deaths in the construction workplace. From 1995 to 1999 with an average of 362 fatal falls occurred; this trend is on the rise, (OSHA, 2010). OSHA states that it is important that safety and health programs have steps or measures to protect construction workers from falls on sites. Most fall-related injuries occur from unprotected side walls, wall openings, floor holes, not using scaffolding correctly, unguarded protruding rebar and not using ladders correctly, (OSHA, 2010).

Falls from a height or from an elevation will count towards one third of all deaths in construction. Majority of construction work is conducted above ground, several stories in the air. Leading cause of falls are due to construction companies not having or utilizes the safety program that works towards a reduction in fall related accidents, (OSHA, 2010). To better assist construction companies that have a poor or no safety program that is geared to reduce falls , OSHA has created a program within their own OSHA website, (OSHA, 2014,).

The site is called the OSHA Construction eTool. This site works towards education companies and workers on the dangers at a construction site; it covers six topics. One of these topics is falls. Under the falls category it has is broken down into four subjects that are easy to follow. Unprotected sides, wall openings, and floor holes, improper scaffold construction, unguarded protruding steel rebars, and misuse of portable ladders, (OSHA, 2014, <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/construction/falls/mainpage.html>).

Unprotected sides, wall openings, and floor holes: In this topic it covers the dangers working from six feet or above. It discuss there is not protection from openings at the work site, there will be injuries. Injuries can range from strains and sprains, broken bones to death, (OSHA, 2010). The topic goes into more detail on three requirements that a site will need when there are openings and work being done from 6 feet or more.

OSHA discusses the use of a guardrail system, a safety net system and a personal fall arrest system. The guardrail system is when workers are exposed to vertical drops of six feet or more. OSHA requires the company to have fall protection in the form of deployable safety nets. In the website it lists vertical and horizontal requirements for the safety nets. And lastly providing fall arrest equipment for every worker and the training on how to use them. Improper scaffold construction: In this subsection it covers how to utilizes scaffolding; it goes into detail on the proper height, dimension of the scaffolding, how to use midrails, mesh and other intermediate measure to prevent falls. Unguarded protruding steel rebars: In this subsection it discusses the use of reinforcing bars to have unguarded and protruding

steel. Falls onto a rebar can result in injuries from impaling; serious injury to death, (OSHA, 2010).

It goes further to discuss ways to guard against unprotected steel bars that protrude from below. Also use other techniques to protect workers, such as bending the end of the rebar so that the rebar is not upright or the use of rebar caps, that cover the ends of the rebar. Misuse of portable ladders: With ladders used so frequently to get up to lower heights, the use of ladders can greatly contribute to fall incidents. Here OSHA has briefly touches on positioning and goes into how to avoid the hazard. In order to help reduce the number of accidents and deaths, OSHA has teamed with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA), (OSHA, 2010). The educational training program named PLAN PROVIDE TRAIN. This website is an outreach campaign to raise awareness for companies and its workers on the hazards of falls from ladders, scaffolds and roofs.

PLAN: In this section it discusses the idea of having a good plan to combat falls. Planning out the projects that need to be done and the safety tools that will be needed before the job begins. This part also talks to companies to plan safety costs into the cost of the project, (OSHA, 2010, <https://www.osha.gov/stopfalls/>). PROVIDE: Having planned for the project, the next step is getting the right equipment on the site to keep workers safe. Any type of work that requires workers six feet or higher, runs the risk of injuries due to falls. The key is to protect the workers; including the correct fall harnesses, the correct ladders for the particular job, and the use of personal fall arrest systems.

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TRAIN: The best safety equipment can be provided, but rendered useless if the workers do not know the proper ways to use and maintain the safety equipment. In this section it hits hard to both the worker and employer that training is required. The setup and safe use of equipment are the best methods to use safety equipment, (OSHA, 2010, <https://www.osha.gov/stopfalls/>). In this website there are many interactive tools that can be used to help educate on fall safety. One of them is the use of the Toolbox Talks; this is where employers can obtain materials and resources about fall safety. Specific talking points and materials are provided to help employers educate the workers on falls from ladders, scaffolds and roofs.

With the construction work site being so ever changing, having new jobs each day and each job changes as construction is being completed, it is important that employers and company's recognize the importance of a good fall protection program. OSHA and NORA has put together great material to start new or existing companies a way to educate their workers. With the land and space to grow outwards seems to be slowing down, the growth upwards continues to grow. Employers will always be faced with injuries in the workplace and will need to address the needs of the workers. Having a good fall protection program is the first step in reducing the number of incidents, but it will require the second step of management support and sense of urgency to push the programs.

References

Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), 2014. Visit the site at, <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/construction/falls/mainpage.html>

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Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), 2010, Plan Provide Train, visit the website at, <https://www.osha.gov/stopfalls/>