YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO FALL PROTECTION IN 2020

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FALL PROTECTION IN THE 2020 WORKPLACE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

You're always thinking about how to improve the safety of your employees and the environment they work in. That's because you understand how quickly accidents in the workplace can happen and how devastating their effects can be.

As workplaces advance and evolve, fall protection methods must as well. Advancements in the fall protection industry make your life easier, but more importantly, they keep your employees safer. As year-end approaches, you'll want to be one step ahead, looking forward to 2020 and the new ways you can protect employees from workplace falls and accidents.

Workplace safety is essential for an efficient, healthy company. Safety in the workplace requires an educated workforce, a confident understanding of OSHA regulations, and an interest in the latest industry updates. You want your employees to be safe and confident in their workplace. This guide shows you how to boost your employees' confidence level, maintain your company's safety measures, and improve them for the coming year and beyond.

WHY IS FALL PROTECTION A PRIORITY?

Believe it or not, falls are far more common in the workplace than the average employer might realize. In fact, OSHA names falling as one of the most common causes of workplace fatalities. The risks are even greater when the fall is to a lower level, which has been named by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics as the most deadly type of workplace fall. Fall protection and prevention is a vital part of your employees' safety.

Many employees wrongly assume that their reflexes will save them from the damages of falling, or that their years of experience protect them from a damaging fall. Falling, however, is an inescapable part of work life in many industries, and it can happen to anyone at any time. Even the most experienced or nimble worker can easily slip, lose their grip or balance, or simply miss a beat. When your workplace includes elevated platforms, manholes, scaffolding, roofs, or other fall risks, a simple mistake can become serious in an instant.

Falling is one of the most common causes of workplace fatalities.

In order to protect your labor force form the danger of injurious or fatal falls, a system of fall protection and prevention must be implemented and regularyly updated to the newest OSHA standards. For thorough protection, prevention efforts should range from company-wide training to the increased use of OSHA-compliant devices like:

- **Guardrails**

- **Mezzanine Fall Protection Gates**

- **Harnesses**

- **Equipment Guarding**

- **Access Control Gates**

- **Skylight Protection**

- **Life Lines**

Prevention begins with a critical look at your current fall protection system.

Preparing your workplace for 2020 means taking a critical look at your current fall protection system and making improvements where necessary.
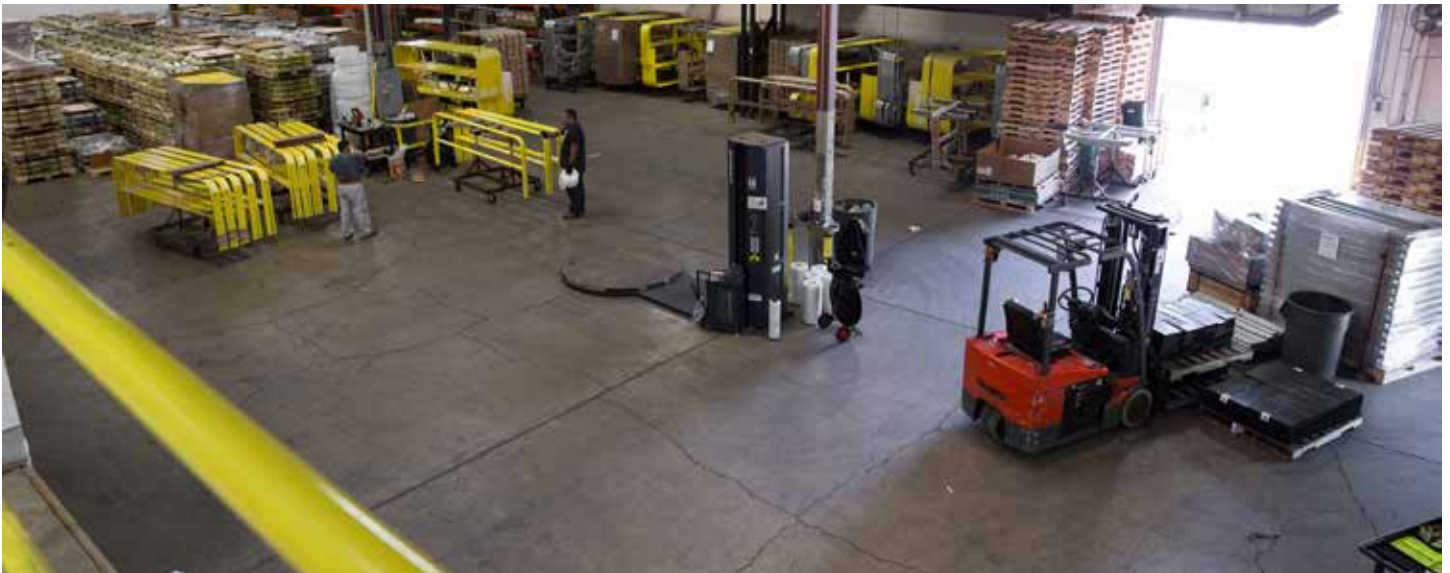
STEP BY STEP: HOW YOUR COMPANY CAN PREVENT FALLS

Fall protection is likely already a high priority. But with changing regulations and the constant risk of injury, there is no place for complacency when it comes to the measures your company has taken to protect its workforce.

Thorough fall protection requires a culture of safety as well as OSHA-certified fall prevention measures. It includes a multi-faceted program implemented company-wide, ideally comprised of these essential steps:

1. **LEARN.** Familiarize yourself with fall protection rules from OSHA, and make sure you know any additional rules your company has in place.

2. **MONITOR.** Thoroughly investigate workplace fall hazards on a regular basis.

3. **CHANGE.** Eliminate these hazards whenever possible.

4. **EDUCATE.** Teach your workforce about the remaining fall hazards and proper workplace safety protocol.

5. **PREVENT.** Install and maintain fall prevention and protection devices.

An intimate knowledge of the workplace and the regulations that apply to it is crucial. Floor holes, elevated platforms, open-sided platforms and floors, as well as drops to lower levels must be monitored carefully. Another important consideration is that fall protection can differ based on the location and the type of workplace, so what works in one location may not in another.

Floor holes and skylights require toe-boards and railings, floor hole covers, or skylight protection guards. Elevated platforms and potentially dangerous equipment (including conveyer belts, vats, and heavy machinery) are often better suited to guardrails and other stet. In worksites where the potential danger of falling is extreme, you'll need to implement even further safety measures, such as safety harnesses and lines, safety nets, mezzanine fall protection gates, and access control gates.

Understand that falls are not hypothetical.

A truly prepared workplace understands that falls are not hypothetical. In other words, instead of asking yourself what you would do if a worker falls, make sure you know how they will be protected when they fall.

DETERMINING THE AREAS OF YOUR BUILDING THAT NEED PROTECTION

Different parts of your building have different requirements, and it's important that appropriate and necessary safety measures are implemented everywhere. Varying levels, open manholes, pits, vats, roofs, and heavy equipment all call for their own protection.

A standard rule of thumb can be found in the "trigger height." For workers who are working above ground level or above a lower level, there is a widely recognized trigger height of four feet. Once you have workers four feet from the ground or lower level, you are required to protect them from falls. The trigger height, however, is not the last word on the subject.

"Trigger height" is any height four feet removed from ground or lower level.

Rooftop worksites are especially in need of up-to-date fall protection and prevention. Not only does the average rooftop worksite present more risk of falling than other worksites, but there is also a

higher propensity for environmental risks. Slipping hazards caused by inclement weather, such as snow, wind, and rain, are often joined by debris from the worksite and from the surrounding environment. As such, rooftop worksites must be outfitted with OSHA-compliant safety measures, often mixing active safety measures such as harnesses and lines with passive safety measures like guardrails and safety gates.

OSHA REGULATIONS AND YOUR COMPANY

Since falling is such a common cause of injury and fatality in the workplace, it's essential to stay informed of OSHA's regulations surrounding fall prevention and protection. Your workforce has the right to a safe, healthy workplace, and your responsibilities include:

- **Providing accessible and thorough training on job hazards**
- **Maintaining a workplace that is free of known dangers**
- **Providing fall protection and prevention equipment at no cost to workers**
- **Keeping workplace floors clean and, if possible, dry**
- **Allowing for open communication and reporting of health and safety concerns**

EDUCATING YOUR LABOR FORCE

A workplace fall can happen to anyone, and when someone does fall, it affects everyone. As such, every member of your team must be an informed, active participant in increasing the safety of your organization.

You can educate your team using:

- **OSHA training programs**
- **Up-to-date safety handbooks**
- **Robust safety orientation for new hires**

Safety in the workplace is not about hierarchy; it's about community.

But perhaps the most important part of education is culture. By fostering a culture of safety in your company, you'll inspire your employees to commit to their own safety as well as that of others. This means a worker should feel comfortable reminding their manager or CEO of slip and fall hazards, or insisting that they make use of fall protection devices. Safety in the workplace is not about hierarchy; it's about community.

For employers, the social structure of safety is equally as important as the physical structure. Fall safety prevention devices like guardrails, safety gates, and harnesses aren't the only necessities; safety training is just as essential. This includes training on the safe use of, and navigation around, dangerous equipment and hazardous heights, as well as fall protection and prevention.

Employees, for their part, must participate in these trainings, actively recognize unsafe practices as soon as they witness them, and feel comfortable reporting their concerns. They should also know which areas of their workplace present fall risks and be vigilant about limiting their exposure to these risk.

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KEEPING YOUR STAFF SAFE IN THE YEAR AHEAD

A company is only as good as its employees, and employees can only be as safe as their work environment allows them to be. Therefore, it's essential that you remain committed to and invested in your fall prevention methods. By prioritizing fall and accident prevention education, creating a culture of safety, analyzing fall prevention methods already in place, and updating them to reflect new guidelines and innovations, you can keep your workplace as safe as possible. 2020 is the year to take your company's safety culture to the next level. With the proper safeguards at your disposal, you can make sure everyone is safe under your watch.

Sources: OSHA.gov; OSHAtrain.org

ABOUT BLUEWATER

BlueWater builds rooftop safety solutions to the highest OSHA standards. BlueWater fall protection systems ensure the safety of employees and contractors, so those in charge can rest easy and focus on other things that are equally important for day-to-day operations.

ABOUT FABENCO

Fabenco offers a complete line of high-quality industrial safety gates. Our full range of solutions helps companies eliminate the time and expense of fabricating their own gates while providing fall protection, access control, machine guarding, pedestrian traffic management and security.