

Building construction, erecting scaffolding, roofing, window cleaning, painting and demolition are examples of jobs that may require working at heights. Falls from elevation can cause serious injuries, such as concussions and broken bones, and can result in long-term disability or even fatality.

What's the hazard?

A hazard is something that may expose a person to a risk of injury. Falls from elevation are often the result of a combination of factors. Below are examples of hazards that often contribute to falls and injuries when working at heights. Which could occur in your workplace? Are there any others that may be relevant in your workplace?

Examples of hazards that could contribute to falls from elevation include:

- working without proper fall protection
- not following safe work procedures
- not checking the condition of equipment
- slippery or uneven surfaces
- overexertion
- not using equipment properly
- using equipment without proper training

What can be done to prevent falls when working at heights?

The most effective way to prevent a fall is to eliminate the need to work at heights. If that's not possible, there are a few ways to reduce the risk.

- Safe work procedures, like using three points of contact when climbing onto or down from equipment, can also prevent injuries when working at heights.
- Guardrails can form a protective barrier around an opening or edge to prevent a fall to a lower level.
- Fall restraint systems can prevent injury by attaching workers to a fixed-length line that prevents them from travelling too close to an opening or edge.
- Fall arrest systems (including a lanyard or lifeline, a harness and an anchor) can prevent injury after a fall by stopping workers from hitting the surface below.

Required by law:

- employers must do hazard assessments and identify any hazards in their workplaces, including hazards when working at heights
- employers must have safe work procedures for identified hazards that cannot be eliminated
- employers must offer training to employees on safe work procedures
- employers must have procedures for reporting, investigating, and documenting incidents and injuries, and offer training to employees on those procedures
- employers must provide and ensure fall restraint or arrest protection is correctly used where required

Talk leader instructions:

- This is background information ONLY.
- Be sure to customize to your organization.
- Consider printing copies of this sheet for yourself and each participant.
- Lead a discussion with your workers about the materials on this sheet.
- Be sure to give real life examples whenever possible. Be open to questions.
- Conclude with a brief review of the main points or a summary based on the discussion.
- Fill in the name of your organization, location and the date on your sheet. Have each worker sign your sheet to confirm their attendance.
- File your sheet in your worker records to document the Safety Talk.

- employers must have fall protection programs where required
- workers must correctly wear all required components of a personal protection system for fall arrest
- employers must ensure guards, guardrails, safety nets or other devices are installed and inspected where required
- employers and workers have specific requirements when working at heights in building construction, see Yukon *Workplace Health and Safety Regulations*, Part 10

Additional controls:

- practise good housekeeping
- inspect and maintain footwear
- inspect, maintain and replace fall protection equipment as required by the manufacturer
- carry only as much can be safely handled
- maintain appropriate pace
- stay alert and avoid distractions
- maintain quality of walking surfaces
- double check surfaces when carrying large items

Discussion questions:

1. What safe work procedures are in your workplace to prevent falls from elevation and is training offered on those procedures?
2. Does your workplace have appropriate fall arrest protection and procedures for workers?

More information:

If you have questions about preventing falls when working at heights, please contact:

- Workers' Safety and Compensation Board, 867-667-5450 or 1-800-661-0443 or worksafe@gov.yk.ca

Disclaimer

This resource has been prepared to help workplaces understand and comply with workplace health and safety laws. It is not legal advice and is not intended to replace the *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*, S.Y. 2021, c.11 and *Workplace Health and Safety Regulations*.

Safety Talk record:

Print and complete this page or fill in electronically, then save as a record of your Safety Talk.

Comments/suggestions

Organization name

Safety Talk leader

Date

Safety Talk participants

print name

signature
