Prevent Injuries From Falling Objects Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Falling objects, such as work materials and tools, present a serious safety concern whenever work is done overhead or in an elevated location. This hazard is commonly forgotten until a near miss or injury serves as a stark reminder.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

DANGERS AND HAZARDS OF FALLING OBJECTS

The most common falling objects at a construction site are dropped tools from fellow workers. Poorly placed buckets, tools, hammers, and scraps of wood or metal can fall and injure multiple workers.

One of the most dangerous scenarios at work is when someone drops something while working at a height or an object is knocked off an edge unexpectedly, which can result in terrible injuries or fatalities to employees. Employers must have a safe work procedure in place for employees working at heights, as well as give proper training to all employees involved. Inspection of equipment and working platforms is required on a regular basis to ensure the safety of individuals working at height as well as those present below the working areas.

The most common injuries workers suffer from falling objects are bruises, fractures, strains, and sprains. The objects that commonly fall range from large items such as roof trusses and steel beams to small items such as fasteners and small hand tools.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

REDUCE THE RISK OF FALLING OBJECTS

- Be careful to stay out of areas with posted signs warning about the potential for falling objects.
- Stay away from barricaded hazard areas.
- Never walk or stand in the fall zone under a crane, hoist, front loader, or other pieces of heavy equipment.
- Do not walk or stand under ladders or scaffolds, or any other place where overhead work is being done as objects and debris are likely to fall.
- Always use the right equipment for jobs or tasks at hand.
- Do not stack materials or objects too high.
- Take the time to stack materials in such a way that prevents sliding, falling,

or having them collapse.
- Inspect tools and equipment before using them.
- Never use faulty or improperly maintained equipment or tools.
- Do not exceed the lifting capacity of a crane, lift, or hoist.
- When doing overhead work, secure your tools and equipment properly.
- Use tool lanyards to prevent tools from falling.
- Keep material 3 feet from a leading edge, other than material required for work in process.
- Remove items from all loose or unsealed pockets, especially top shirt pockets, such as phones, pens, and tools.
- Do not hang objects over guardrails.
- Secure all objects when working on an elevated surface.
- Ensure toe boards are in place and inspected frequently.
- Hard hats and personal protective equipment for every person in areas at risk for falling objects.
- Rope off the area, if possible, where fall or drop hazards may exist.
- Inspect all PPE prior to use to confirm it still meets manufacturers' recommendations.
- Communicate often. Work as a team to avoid complacency and remain vigilant of these procedures at all times.

BEST STEPS TO PREVENT INJURIES FROM FALLING OBJECTS

The eyes of an employee are the greatest tools in the injury prevention toolbox. With them an employee can spot hazards and take the steps necessary to prevent injury.

1. **Provide Warning.** When working on a jobsite where the potential for falling objects exist there must be adequate warning for employee and other people who may enter the jobsite. Ways to do this include verbally communicating the hazards and by placing of signage tat states beware of falling equipment. Another way to ensure safety of guest on the jobsite is to have an employee in charge of escorting them who is aware of areas that have potential for falling objects.
2. **Secure loads.** If an employee is required to lift a load to a higher level they need to make sure the load is properly secure. In cases of lifting a pallet with stacks of boxes plastic wrap can provide stability and keep objects from falling. If using plastic wrap don't forget that plastic may stretch due to the high heat at the top of the racks and may cause the load to shift. For heavier loads employees can use metal or cloth straps to secure.
3. Properly move load. When moving a load, it is important to never lift, lower or swing a load over anyone's head. In areas where loads are being placed on high shelves with the potential to tumble over the other side ensure you have a spotter in place that keeps employees from entering the backside hazard and that can help instruct the employee placing the load. If possible, restrict these stacking and heavy moving operations to hours when fewer people are present.
4. **Keep a clean worksite.** Tools and debris are one of the main causes of falling objects. To mitigate this hazard employees need to ensure the work areas is clean and tidy. When a worker is done using a tool, they need to put it in the proper storage area.
5. **Administrative controls.** Administrative controls are a great way to prevent or stop falling objects in the workplace. Examples of these types of controls include the installation of boards on the sides of elevated work areas or scaffolds to prevent objects from falling over the edge, the usage of bars across storage areas to keep material from tumbling out, the usage of nets to capture falling object, the implementation of fences or other barricades to keep workers and guest out of fall zones and scheduling work for a time when the amount of people at lower levels is at a minimum.
6. **Protective Equipment.** When all else fails the last line of defense is personal protective equipment. Anyone who is going to be in an area where to potential for falling object hazards exists needs to wear a hard hat and steel toed shoes.

Both of these pieces of equipment must be inspected before use and be in proper working condition and fit properly.

FINAL WORD

Whenever there’s a risk of falling objects at a worksite, an employer is required to provide protection for workers and visitors to the site. Hard hats and safety shoes are examples of personal protection against falling objects.