



Preventing Falls and Regulatory Enforcement

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As the fall prevention campaign in construction has been highlighting, fall protection in construction is one of the most cited OSHA standards. In 2018, there were 320 fatal falls to a lower level out of 1,008 construction fatalities. Fall protection was the number one most cited standard in Construction for 2019 and is always in the Top 10 list for OSHA violations going back many years.

Most employers are trying to follow the fall protection regulations in my experience. They provide the right equipment and train their employees to use the equipment. The question then remains, how is fall protection continually the number one citation? I offer two suggestions to help reduce the lack of use of fall protection on job sites.

First, create a fall protection plan prior to anyone working at heights. The plan will cover how the job is to be performed and how employees are to perform each task while remaining tied in. Having a written plan helps ensure everyone understands what equipment is to be used and how. A good fall protection plan can help spot problems prior to workers being on the roof and running into areas where use of their fall protection appears infeasible.

Second, enforce a disciplinary policy when workers are found to not be using their fall protection equipment. Consistent enforcement of discipline for violating both the fall protection plan and your fall protection program shows employees that the use of fall protection while working at heights is a real requirement. Document your enforcement even if it only involves a verbal warning. From a legal perspective, consistent, documented discipline helps provide you a defense against fall protection citations.

The goal is to ensure workers who are six feet or more above lower levels are using the right equipment to protect themselves from falls. While no amount of planning can ensure you will not be cited, these two steps contribute to a well-rounded fall protection program.

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