

Renew Your Emphasis on Preventing Falls

By WAYNE CREASAP

AS WE HEAD into another construction season, it's easy to get wrapped up in budgets and scheduling. Safety is also a part of the equation, but it's easy to become complacent. Although we have seen a statistical improvement in safety performance over the past several years, the industry still has a long way to go before all workplace injuries are eliminated.

As many of you know, April 28th is commonly known as Workers' Memorial Day. This is a chance to remember those who have been killed, injured, or made ill on the job and, at the same time, highlight the preventable nature of most workplace accidents.

This year, a new campaign will be unveiled to promote safer work at heights and prevent falls throughout the construction industry. While this campaign may seem focused on small employers, particularly in the residential construction market, it presents an opportunity for all companies, regardless of size, to build on and improve existing fall prevention programs. The Campaign to Prevent Falls in Construction was conceived through a government-labor-management partnership and brings together federal and state governments, private industry, trade associations, academia, and professional and labor organizations to address the life-or-death issue of falls in construction.


The Construction Sector Council, the core of the Campaign partnership, is one of ten multi-stakeholder Councils convened by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and

Health (NIOSH) through its National Occupational Research Agenda Program (NORA). The Construction Sector Council has identified top priorities for construction safety and health research and practice in the National Construction Agenda. The first of these priorities is to reduce injuries and deaths from falls to a lower level. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is not only an active member of the Construction Sector Council but is also co-sponsoring the falls prevention campaign. Its involvement will be similar to the Campaign to Prevent Heat Illness, which focuses on the importance of water, rest and shade for outdoor workers.

TAUC recognizes that falls are the leading cause of fatalities in the construction industry, causing 260 worker deaths in 2010 – more than one-third of all fatalities in the construction industry. And, more specifically, over one-third of the fall fatalities in 2010 were from ladders or roofs. If your company performs work on ladders or on roofs, take the time to re-examine your safety plans and procedures. Additionally, tens of thousands are injured every year from either falls on the same level or to a lower level. Recognizing these grim statistics, TAUC, under the direction of Safety and Health Committee Chairman Tony Downey, has become an active participant in the NORA Construction Sector Council and in the planning for the falls prevention campaign. The Campaign offers an opportunity for all employers in the construction

industry to re-establish their focus on fall prevention.

The falls prevention campaign is not an enforcement initiative, but it has real potential to make an impact and reduce the number of fall injuries and fatalities in the industry. When you hear the announcement about the falls campaign, don't discount it as not applying to your industry. Instead, see it as an opportunity to build on your existing programs and be sure to pass on the information to others who could benefit from your knowledge and expertise – you might help save a life!

Remember: Safety Pays, Falls Cost. The Best in the Business Play It Safe. 

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