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Construction Safety - OSHA's Focus Four Hazards Cont.

OSHA Rules and Regulations for Focus Four Hazards

With the increased emphasis on focus four hazards, it should come as no surprise that OSHA has also developed various rules, regulations, and best practices that companies can implement to help keep their workers safe on the job site. There are a variety of measures that construction professionals should adhere to in order to minimize their risk of a recordable on the job site. Here's a closer look at some of them:

Falls

Proper PPE, such as personal fall arrest equipment, should always be worn. This is in addition to hard hats, safety glasses, gloves, and more.

Workers should always maintain three points of contact when working at elevated heights, especially when mounting and dismounting equipment.

Shoes or boots with adequate traction should always be worn on site.

Professionals should be properly trained on using ladders and mobile elevated lift units prior to working with them.

Scaffolding should be installed correctly and inspected each day to ensure it is safe.

In addition to fall arrest equipment, guardrails, nets, and other components should be installed when appropriate.

The job site should also remain neat and tidy to prevent tripping over equipment, debris, building materials, or any other objects.

Struck By

Ensure materials are stacked and stored properly.

Set up barriers around any heavy or suspended loads to ensure workers are a safe distance away.

Secure tools and equipment properly when not in use, especially if they're at elevated heights.

Ensure reverse signal alarms are always working properly on equipment to help alert any workers in the vicinity of potential threats.

Ensure workers are wearing high-visibility safety vests so they can be seen by those operating equipment or vehicles.

Electrocution

Ensure that PPE is worn properly by all workers. This includes gloves, boots, long sleeves, safety glasses, and may also include face shields.

Enforce a lockout and tag-out procedure on the job site so that equipment can be properly used, stored, and secured when not in use.

Ensure equipment is de-energized properly.

Set up mobile barriers and ensure that workers stay safely away from any parts or equipment that is energized and could pose a safety threat.

Maintain a safe working distance from power lines, especially those that are overhead.

Caught-In/Between

Workers should be trained on the basics, such as ensuring that they never put themselves between any piece of heavy equipment and an immovable object.

Workers should refrain from wearing baggy clothes, jewelry or other items that may get caught in vehicles or equipment.

Stay away from the swing radius of any moving or rotating objects.

How to Mitigate Risk

In addition to following the aforementioned best practices, there are also a number of other things that you can implement on the job site to mitigate risk or minimize the severity of injuries should they occur. Here's a look:

PPE

No one should be allowed on site without the proper PPE. Proper shoes and boots should be worn with adequate traction to prevent slips and falls. High-visibility safety vests, shirts or jackets should be worn by all workers to ensure that any equipment or vehicle operators can see them. And hard hats, safety glasses, and, in some cases, face shields and gloves, should also be worn on site.

Even in the event of a focus four incident, this PPE can help prevent serious injuries or even any injury at all.

Safety Training

Safety best practices should be regularly reinforced on every project. Best practices should also be regularly enforced during morning huddles and Toolbox Talks. Safety walks should be regularly performed to monitor activity and corrective action should be implemented if workers are not adhering to protocol.

Learn from Mistakes

Every company - regardless of the industry or market they work in - should always be striving for continuous improvement. That said, site managers should be helping the field personnel/subs they oversee learn from any mistakes on site so that they can be corrected in similar, future scenarios. This applies with any potential safety incident, but especially with any of the focus four hazards. Even if workers wear the appropriate PPE, and adhere to safety guidelines and best practices, incidents can still happen. There's a lesson from every one of them - and implementing this lesson and relaying it as a teaching tool to other workers should not be something that goes to waste.

Any industry that involves as many tools, equipment and other miscellaneous threats as construction does is going to have its fair share of dangers. And while it's the goal of the industry to build every project without any recordables, there's bound to be issues. By following these guidelines, you can help your jobsite become safer.

Construction Safety - OSHA's Focus Four Hazards

While the construction industry is largely responsible for helping move the American economy forward by building the structures that we live, work, and play in, these job sites remain one of the most hazardous working environments. In fact, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, it's estimated that one out of every five worker deaths are in construction. Additionally, the industry is responsible for more than 1,000 fatalities per year and more than 200,000 non-fatal injuries annually. The month of November, we'll discuss some of the leading causes of injury on construction sites and what can be done to prevent them.

OSHA's "Focus Four" Hazards

The good news is that there's been an increased focus on job site safety over the past several decades, so fatalities and recordable injuries are considerably down from what they once were. Additionally, OSHA, or the Occupational Safety & Health Administration, has been able to pinpoint the four major causes of injury on construction sites, thereby permitting safety professionals to more specifically zero in on training and better prevent incidents before they occur.

These four main hazards, or "focus four," that OSHA has identified as the major threats to the construction industry are:

Falls: This category consists of both falls from heights and slip and falls. It's the leading cause of injury and death on construction job sites.

Struck by an object: This involves being struck by building materials or construction equipment.

Electrocution: Electrocution can lead to burns and in the most severe cases, cardiac arrest, and nerve issues.

Caught-in/between: On any type of construction site, there's the threat of the body, or parts of the body, getting caught in between other objects or equipment.

Construction-Related Injury Statistics

It's estimated that one out of every five work-related deaths in the private sector is in construction. That's 20 percent, an astounding number. Furthermore, it's estimated that if the construction industry could eliminate the focus four hazards from their job sites, it would save nearly 600 lives each year (not to mention a countless number of injuries).

Falls are the leading cause of death in the construction industry, accounting for about 34 percent of all fatalities. Being struck by an object is the next most common cause of death on the job site, accounting for more than 10 percent of all fatalities. Electrocution and getting caught in or between an object come in at 9 percent and 6 percent, respectively. Together, the focus four account for about 60 percent of all construction fatalities per year, per data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Next Week: OSHA Rules and Regulations for Focus Four Hazards

Winter Construction Site Hazards & How to Prevent Them - Cold Stress

Winter Construction Site Hazards & How to Prevent Them: Cold Stress

Cold Fact: An average of 1,301 deaths per year from 1999 to 2011 were associated with exposure to excessive natural cold. [CDC](#)

Temperatures near or below freezing and strong winds can cause one's skin and internal body temperatures to fall. Wetness or dampness from body sweat contributes to heat loss. When the body can't warm itself, serious illness and injury may result, leading to permanent tissue damage or death. Types of cold stress that construction workers should be aware of include:

Trench foot This is caused by prolonged exposure to wetness and cold temperatures. It occurs when the body constricts the blood vessels to prevent heat loss. This shuts down circulation in the feet. Skin tissue begins to die because of a lack of oxygen and nutrients and a buildup of toxic products. Redness, swelling, numbness and blisters are signs. Workers with signs of trench foot should remove their boots and wet socks, dry their feet, avoid walking, keep their feet elevated and seek medical help.

Frostbite This is the freezing of skin and underlying tissue. It can cause permanent injury. In severe cases, it leads to amputation. Workers with frostbite may experience reddened skin that develops into gray or white patches in the fingers, toes, nose, or ear lobes. Other signs are Skin that becomes firm; tingling, aching or loss of feeling; and blisters. A worker with frostbite should be warmed immediately and get medical attention.

Hypothermia– This occurs when the normal body temperature (98.6°F) drops to less than 95°F. It can lead to unconsciousness and death. Uncontrollable shivering is an early sign of hypothermia. Additional signs include loss of coordination, confusion, slurred speech and slowed heart rate / breathing. A worker showing signs of hypothermia should be warmed by removing wet clothing and wrapping the worker entirely in layers of blankets and a vapor barrier (tarp or garbage bag). Emergency medical help should be sought. If medical help is more than 30 minutes away, place hot water bottles or hot packs in the armpits and sides of the chest and groin and feed the worker warm liquids.

Safe Work Practices for Cold Environments

- Eliminate or limit work as much as possible when extremely cold temperatures are present.
- Layer up on [clothing](#) and keep clothes dry. It is important to remove any wet clothing or boots and put on dry items when working in a cold environment.
- Take breaks in warm areas or vehicles as needed.
- Drink warm beverages to help warm up your core temperature. Site managers should be encouraging/providing their staff the opportunity to consume enough warm drinks to stay hydrated.
- Shielding work areas from drafts or wind to reduce wind chill.
- Monitor the condition of other workers around you. If you notice something could be wrong get them into a warm area and notify a supervisor.

Winter Construction Site Hazards & How to Prevent Them - Falls on Icy Surfaces

Winter Construction Site Hazards & How to Prevent Them – Falls on Icy Surfaces

Cold Fact: Slips, trips, and falls caused 229,190 non-fatal workplace injuries and 699 fatal work injuries in 2013. ([Bureau of Labor Statistics](#))

Falls are among the most common construction site accidents. If you add snow and ice into the mix, the hazard increases significantly. Falls can cause fractures, head injuries, traumatic brain injuries (TBI), back and spinal cord injuries, and more.

Ice, melted snow, and general wetness all greatly increase the risk of slip and fall accidents on the construction site. Site Superintendents, managers, and crew leads will have to survey for slipping hazards and address the risk accordingly. They may need to use sand for traction, de-icing agents, or other means along with regular cleanups to address the risks.

Fall injuries can be prevented by:

- Dress appropriately. Encouraging workers to wear insulated and water-resistant boots with good rubber treads.
- Using safety lines for any work at a height above the ground.
- Be cautious and allow for extra time. Encourage workers to take short steps and walk at a slower pace on icy or snow-covered surfaces so they can react quickly to a change in traction.

Immediate action steps when a fall occurs:

- Don't get up right away or let anyone help you up immediately; this avoids the potential of causing further injury. Take your time, lie there for a moment, and assess how you are feeling.
- After assessing your injury status, if you can get up, roll to one side. Bend your knees toward you, push up with your arms and then use your legs to stand up the rest of the way.
- If someone assists you to your feet, ensure that he or she doesn't get hurt, too.
- Report incident to your crew lead, site superintendent, and/or direct supervisor to complete a First Report of Injury form.
- If the fall has led to an emergency, call 911 or emergency medical help immediately.