



Insightful Safety

News, Views, Tips and Techniques
July 2020

MSHA ENFORCEMENT TRENDS

The Mine Safety and Health Administration often announces particular things that they have instructed their inspectors to look for while visiting a mine site. These things are generally based on recent fatalities or accident trends within the mining industry.



During their June 30, 2020 Quarterly Stakeholder Call, they brought a great deal of focus on Slip and Fall Fatalities which make up one-third of the fatalities, year to date. Such accidents also lead to a high number of serious injuries.

Year	Slip or Fall of Person Fatalities	Total Fatalities	Percentage of Total Fatalities
2015	2	29	6.9%
2016	2	25	8.0%
2017	1	28	3.6%
2018	0	29	0.0%
2019	4	28	14.3%
2020 (YTD)	3	9	33.3%

Since MSHA does not have an actual “Fall Protection” standard, inspectors will utilize 56.15005 (Safety Belts and Lines) or 56.11001 (Safe Access) when encountering potentially violative conditions. Both of these standards are in the top 20 violations cited by inspectors.

So, if you’re wondering what MSHA inspectors are going to particularly look for when they visit next, the answer is clear...they will look at your fall protection procedures and practices. It’s prominent on their radar so it should also be on yours.

If they see a non-compliant condition, they will likely cite it as being a Serious and Substantial, (S&S) violation. While such citations can be expensive, allowing workers to work without proper fall protection systems; anchors, lanyards, harnesses, guardrails, etc. is unconscionable. The risk is too great for a serious injury to occur in such accidents.

You can access recordings of the Quarterly Stakeholder calls on MSHA’s website on the link which appears below. Copies of the slides used for many of the virtual meetings are also available.

<https://www.msha.gov/training-education/quarterly-training-calls>

DON’T TAKE THE FALL

Take a moment...or several moments...to see what tasks your workers and others on your site perform where there is a risk of falling. These tasks may include: working from elevated platforms or walkways above the handrail, on top or shakers or inside crushers, working on the roof or engine compartments of mobile equipment, doing maintenance on the roof of a building, drivers tarping their trailer loads or closing the hatch on a tank, or any other similar job.

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You can use a simple methodology when approaching falling from height issues. Observe – Communicate – Plan – Act.

OBSERVE

As mentioned earlier, use your keen observation eyes as you watch your workers do their jobs. Make note of any time they do something that exposes them from falling from height. This could happen at any time during the course of performing a task that has multiple steps or phases.

COMMUNICATE

Certainly, if during the course of your observations you witness such events, stop the job immediately and explain your concerns. Ask them if there is a safer way to do the job that does not expose them to the hazards you saw. Ask them for their ideas and solutions to the problem. In addition, you can inquire of them of any such hazards BEFORE they begin work and to devise a solution before they are exposed.

DESIGN

With the input from the workers, job planners, safety professionals and others, design the proper solutions. This may require installing proper anchor points in locations that make the most sense for doing the work, ease of use and offering the highest degree of safety. You may need to change how a particular task is executed, such as bringing a motor to ground level instead of performing maintenance on an elevated platform. In many instances, changing a procedure could eliminate or reduce the risk of falls.

ACT

Make the changes as soon as possible and take mitigating steps in the meantime until those changes are completed. An example might be that a manlift is used until anchor points are installed to do a job.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

There are many resources available to help you solve fall from height hazards. These would include reaching out to regulatory agency personnel for input, fall arrest system vendors and consultants who may be experts in this field. However, I would suggest that you begin with speaking with your own workers who do these jobs, day-in and day-out. They likely will be your best resource of solving these problems. Below some online resources that may be helpful in dealing with fall from height risks. Some of these resources are from outside the U.S. since it is a worldwide risk. The information in these articles can easily be used in your employee training.

At What Height Do Falls Become Deadly?

<https://www.safeopedia.com/at-what-height-do-falls-become-deadly/7/7503>

Health and Safety International – Risk Assessment Guide

<https://www.hsimagazine.com/article/fall-protection-individual-and-collective-fall-protection-safety/>

Working at Height: Fall Hazards and Risk Control Measures

<https://hsearticles.blogspot.com/2017/02/working-at-height-hazards-and-risk.html>

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Below is a safety meeting topic that you can use in the workplace. In addition to the hazards we may expect to see in a mining, construction or heavy industrial environment, this meeting topic addresses those that can be found in almost any workplace, including offices. It's basic safety sense, but it's good to be reminded of even the simplest of safety measures

SAFETY MEETING TOPIC – *There's Nothing Funny About Falls*

Slips, trips and falls have been a sure way to get a laugh in movies and cartoons over the years. Human beings have been falling over their own feet ever since they first began to walk. However, except in slapstick comedy, falls are simply not funny. In fact, the subject of falls is extremely serious. Did you know that falls are one of the top leading causes of accidental deaths?



In case you are thinking that falls are only a danger to people who work on scaffolds, elevated work platforms or steel girders up in the sky, think again. Most falls actually occur on the same level and are caused by just tripping over an obstacle or slipping on something.

Here are some ways to prevent falls:

- Keep walkways and floors free of obstacles such as boxes, cords, and litter. Even objects such as pencils on the floor have caused serious falls.
- Flooring surfaces must be even and secured. Watch out for obstacles such as loose tiles or carpeting.
- Close cabinet and desk drawers as soon as you are through with them. Many serious injuries have occurred when people fell over unexpected obstacles like an open bottom drawer on a desk.
- Don't run or walk too fast. Take your time!
- Adjust your walking speed and style to the surface you are traveling on. If the surface is rough, cluttered, slippery or at an angle such as a ramp, you need to slow down and take small careful steps.



- Wear safe footwear, appropriate to your work. Keep your shoelaces tied. Avoid slippery soles and be sure to wear shoes with adequate tread when walking on icy, greasy or wet surfaces. Keep shoes in good repair.
 - Make sure you can see over or around any load you are carrying.
- Take your near misses seriously. Let us say you have just skidded across a slick patch of flooring or tripped over an extension cord. You are not injured, but just a little shaken and embarrassed. Take the time to see why the incident occurred in the first place and identify what can be done to prevent it from happening again. Does the floor need non-skid matting? Should the cord be moved or taped down? Were you hurrying or daydreaming?

It is important to stay alert to slipping and tripping hazards in your work area and the routes which you travel in the course of your shift. Watch out for hazards which might put you in danger of a fall. Think of the other person too. You might know that the corner of the rug is loose or that the floor around that leak is always wet. But some other unsuspecting person might fall victim to these hazards.

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Below is the summary of an accident that occurred at a mining operation that can be used as a safety meeting topic. Names and location of the accident have been omitted from this summary. My appreciation goes to the safety professional who shared this narrative. If you share this with your workers, ask them for other ideas to prevent such accidents and where in their own workplace such conditions might exist.

ACCIDENT REVIEW – *Falling From Elevated Work Area*

A recent accident can serve to remind us that taking chances often results in disaster.

An employee suffered two broken legs when he fell almost 20 feet from a raised platform to the ground. He and a co-worker had been assigned to perform maintenance work on an elevated conveyor head pulley. When they arrived, it was discovered that the repair would require the realignment of the drive motor V-belts.

In accordance with safe work procedures, the conveyor motor was locked-out properly and the guards covering the V-belts were removed. As one worker was about to release tension on the belts so that they could be more easily moved into proper position, the other worker stood on the work deck's handrail in an attempt to move the belts with a small pry bar. Despite his co-worker's warnings to climb down, he continued to stand on the rail and use the pry bar. The pry bar slipped, he lost his balance and fell backwards. He was unable to regain his balance and continued to fall from the handrail to the ground.

Accidents such as this often result in a fatal injury. Fortunately, the injured worker only suffered broken bones. However, following proper safety procedures could have easily prevented this accident.

- Never position yourself in such a place or position that could lead to a fall unless you are wearing proper fall protection.
- Working together often means listening to a co-worker's safety advice or warnings. Look out and help your fellow worker to work safely at all times.
- Perform your tasks in the safest manner possible. If there is more than one way to do that job, choose the safe way – even if it means the job will take a little longer. We all benefit in the long term.

Don't take chances with your health and safety. Doing the job right means doing it safely.

"Insightful Safety" is a periodic newsletter from *Insight Services and Presentations*. The news has been gathered from various public sources and shared with you to keep you abreast of information, trends and ideas that may help you create a safer workplace, safer workers, and a safer home. The views are often my own as are the tips and techniques...though I borrow heavily from friends, colleagues, and experts. Any safety guidance provided is based on common safety sense. If you have any questions or concerns about this, reach out to me or talk to your company's safety professional. Also, none of this is copyrighted, share as you like.



**Insight
Services**
and Presentations

Terry L. Tyson

P: 619.743.5755

E: terry@ttysoninsight.com

W: ttysoninsight.com