



YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO FALL PREVENTION IN 2017



BlueWater

Fabenco



MAKE FALL PREVENTION A PRIORITY IN 2017

You're always thinking about how to improve the safety of your employees and their workspace. That's because you understand how quickly accidents in the workplace can happen and how devastating their effects can be.

As workplaces advance and evolve, fall protection methods are evolving and improving to make your employees safer – and your life easier. As 2016 draws to a close, you'll want to be one step ahead, looking forward to the coming year and the new ways you can protect employees from workplace falls and accidents.

Workplace safety is essential for an efficient, healthy company. Safety in the workplace requires an educated workforce, a confident understanding of OSHA regulations, and an interest in the latest industry updates. You want your employees to be safe and confident in their workplace. This guide will show you how to boost your employees' confidence level, and maintain and improve your company's safety measures for the coming year and beyond.



WHY DOES MY COMPANY NEED FALL PREVENTION?

Sadly, falls are all too common in many workplaces. OSHA names falling as one of the most common causes of workplace fatalities. The risks are even greater when the fall is to a lower level, which has been named by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics as the most deadly type of workplace fall. Fall protection and prevention is a vital component in ensuring your employees' safety in the workplace.

Many employees wrongly assume that their reflexes will save them from a damaging fall, or that their long experience in the workplace insulates them from the danger of falling. Falling, however, is an inescapable part of work life in many industries. Even the most experienced or nimble worker can easily slip, lose their grip or balance, or simply miss a beat. When your workplace includes elevated platforms, manholes, scaffolding, roofs, or any number of other fall risks, simple mistakes like this can become serious in an instant.

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As mentioned earlier, falling to a lower level is one of the most common causes of workplace fatalities. In order to protect your workforce from the all-too-possible danger of injurious or fatal falls, a system of fall protection and prevention must be implemented and updated to the newest OSHA standards, ranging from company-wide training to the increased use of devices like:

- **Guardrails**
- **Mezzanine Fall Protection Gates**
- **Harnesses**
- **Equipment Guarding**
- **Access Control Gates**

Preparing your workplace for 2017 means taking a critical look at your current fall prevention system and making improvements where necessary.



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HOW CAN MY COMPANY PREVENT FALLS?

Chances are that fall protection is already a priority for you, but with changing regulations and the constant risk of injury, you can't afford to be complacent about the measures your company has already taken to protect its workforce.

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Fall protection is a multi-faceted program that must be implemented across a company. An ideal fall protection program should include these essential steps:

Thorough fall protection requires a culture of safety as well as OSHA certified fall prevention measures.

- **Familiarize yourself** with fall protection rules from OSHA, and make sure you know any additional rules your company has in place.
- **Thoroughly investigate** workplace fall hazards on a regular basis.
- **Eliminate these hazards** whenever possible.
- **Educate your workforce** about the remaining fall hazards and proper workplace safety protocol.
- **Install and maintain** fall prevention and protection devices.





An intimate knowledge of the workplace and the regulations that apply to it is crucial. Floor holes, elevated platforms, open-sided platforms and floors, as well as drops to lower levels must be monitored carefully. It's also important to consider that the ideal fall protection differs based on the location and the type of workplace.

Floor holes and skylights require toe-boards, railings, and skylight fall protection guards, while elevated platforms and potentially dangerous equipment (including conveyer belts, vats, and heavy machinery) are often better suited to guardrails and equipment guarding. Other

worksites, where the potential damage of falling is extreme, will require further safety measures, including safety harnesses and lines, safety nets, mezzanine fall protection gates, and access control gates.

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A truly prepared workplace understands that falls are not hypothetical. You should not be asking yourself what would be done if a worker falls, but how will they be protected when they fall.

WHICH AREAS OF MY BUILDING NEED TO BE PROTECTED?

It's important to make sure that appropriate safety measures have been implemented everywhere they are necessary. Varying levels, open manholes, pits, vats, roofs, and heavy equipment all call for their own protection.

A standard rule of thumb can be found in the "trigger height." For workers who are working above ground level or above a lower level, there is a widely recognized "trigger height" of four feet. Once you have workers four feet removed from ground level or a lower level, you are required to protect them from falls. The trigger height, however, is not the last word on the subject.

Rooftop worksites are especially in need of up-to-date fall protection and prevention. Not only does the average rooftop worksite present more risk



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of falling than other worksites, but there is often a higher propensity for environmental risks.

Slipping hazards caused by inclement weather, such as snow, wind, and rain, are often joined by debris from the worksite as well as the surrounding environment. As such, rooftop worksites must be outfitted with OSHA-compliant safety measures, often mixing active safety measures such as harnesses and lines, with passive safety measures like guardrails and safety gates.

HOW IS MY BUSINESS AFFECTED BY OSHA REGULATIONS?

Since falling is such a common cause of injury and fatality in the workplace, it's essential to stay abreast of OSHA's regulations surrounding fall prevention and protection. Your workforce has

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the right to a safe, healthy workplace, and your responsibilities to your workforce include:

- **Providing accessible and thorough training on job hazards**
- **Maintaining a workplace that is free of known dangers**
- **Providing fall protection and prevention equipment at no cost to workers**
- **Keeping workplace floors clean and, if possible, dry**
- **Allowing for open communication and reporting of health and safety concerns**

As this year draws to a close, you will also want to be aware of an OSHA reporting rule that will go into effect beginning on January 1, 2017. According to the OSHA website:

"The new rule, which takes effect Jan. 1, 2017, requires certain employers to electronically submit injury and illness data that they are already required to record on their onsite OSHA Injury and Illness forms. Analysis of this data will enable OSHA to use its enforcement and compliance assistance resources more efficiently. Some of the data will also be posted to the OSHA website."

OSHA's new 2017 reporting regulation will increase transparency and lead to a more informed workforce, public, and government.

This new regulation aims to create a higher standard of worker safety, which will be driven by public scrutiny. It will also enable innovative research that will lead to more efficient, safer workspaces. The institution of this rule enforces the general understanding that workplace safety improves as the community becomes more informed and invested.

HOW DO I EDUCATE MY TEAM ABOUT FALL PROTECTION?

A workplace fall can happen to anyone, and when someone does fall, it affects everyone. As such, every member of your team must be an informed, active participant in increasing the safety of your organization.

You can educate your team using:

- **OSHA Training Programs**
- **Up-to-Date Safety Handbooks**
- **Robust Safety Orientation for New Hires**



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But perhaps the most important part of education is culture. It's important to foster a culture of safety in your workplace. In a safety culture, everyone is committed to their own safety and the safety of others. A worker is comfortable reminding the CEO of slipping hazards, or insisting that they make use of fall protection devices. Safety in the workplace depends less on hierarchies than it does on community.

While employers must institute the physical structure of a healthy and safe workplace by installing and maintaining fall safety prevention devices like guardrails, safety gates, and harnesses, they must also focus on the social structure of safety. This includes training employees both on safe use of and around dangerous equipment, as well as fall prevention and protection.

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Employees, for their part, must participate in trainings and actively recognize unsafe practices as soon as they witness them and feel comfortable reporting them. They should also know which areas of their workplace present fall risks and be vigilant about limiting their exposure to this risk.



MOVING TOWARD A SAFE 2017

A company is only as good as its employees, and employees can only be as safe as their workspace allows them to be. As you've seen in Your Complete Guide to Fall Protection in 2017, it is essential that you remain vigilant and invested in fall prevention methods in your workplace.

In order for a workplace to be as safe as possible, you must prioritize fall and accident prevention education, a culture of safety, and, of course, a stringent focus on maintaining the fall prevention methods already in place and updating fall prevention methods to reflect the newest innovations in the industry.

2017 is the year to take your company's safety culture to the next level. With the proper safeguards and education at your disposal, you can make sure that it is.

Sources: OSHA.gov; OSHAtrain.org

ABOUT SAFETY PRODUCTS GROUP

Safety Products Group, a Tractel company, builds rooftop and in-plant safety products to the highest OSHA standards. Backed by the strength of Bluewater and Fabenco, Safety Products Group rails and gates ensure the safety of employees and contractors, so those in charge can rest easy and focus on other things that are equally important for day-to-day operations. Protect Your People. Protect Your Business. www.SafetyPG.com