



# FALL PREVENTION ALLIANCE TOOLBOX TALK ON ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

Company: \_\_\_\_\_ Job Site Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Finish Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Foreman/Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Most injuries in the workplace happen because safe work practices are not being followed. Inadequate training, carelessness, inattention, not implementing required safeguards, and not wearing appropriate personal protective equipment are the primary causes of on-the-job accidents. When it comes to protecting yourself against falling, “Actions speak louder than words!” When employers and workers recognize and correct hazards, accidents are prevented, illnesses and injuries are avoided, and lives saved.

**The leading causes for OSHA citations relate to the lack of appropriate fall protection.**

**Why we need protection from falling** — We are confident that we will not fall – until we hit the ground. We need protection from falling because we do not have perfect balance and because our bodies injure easily. We may think that our reflexes will protect us and that we will have time to regain our balance when we are about to fall. But split-second reflexes do not prevent most falls. We are falling before we know it – and we do not have to fall far to get hurt.

**Falling without protection** — How do most construction workers fall? Falls from ladders, roofs, and scaffolds account for more than half of all disabling falls to lower levels. These falls are caused by loss of balance due to slipping, tripping, and shifting or unstable ladders.

Leading causes for falls to a lower level in the construction industry include the following:

- From ladders
- From floor, dock, or ground level
- From piled or stacked material
- From roofs
- From scaffolds or staging
- Down stairs
- From nonmoving vehicles
- From girders or structural steel

**How should we protect ourselves from falling?** — For many of us in the construction industry, fall-protection equipment is the first thing that comes to mind – personal-fall-arrest systems, safety nets, or guardrails, etc. But fall protection means more than equipment: Fall-protection is what you do to eliminate hazards that cause falls, to prevent falls from occurring, and to ensure that workers who do fall are not injured.

**You accomplish fall-protection by doing the following:**

- Identifying the workplace hazards that cause falls
- Eliminating hazards that cause falls
- Using appropriate equipment to prevent falls or to protect workers if they do fall
- Making fall protection part of your workplace safety-and-health program
- Training workers to recognize hazards that cause falls
- Understanding OSHA’s Subpart M fall-protection rules

**Fall-protection strategies** — There are three strategies that can be used to protect against falls: 1) eliminate hazards that cause falls; 2) Prevent falls from occurring; or 3) Control falls so that workers are not injured.

**Eliminate the hazard** — When you eliminate a fall hazard, you ensure that the hazard cannot cause a fall – it is the most effective fall-protection strategy. Examples of ways to eliminate fall hazards:

- Install permanent stairs and guardrails early in projects so that workers do not need to use ladders between floors.
- Install guardrails and anchorages on formwork and structural steel beams on the ground before lifting them into place.
- Use tool extensions to perform work from the ground.

**Prevent the fall from occurring** — If you cannot eliminate the hazard, you can still prevent the fall from occurring. Examples that prevent falls: parapet walls, covers, guardrails, handrails, perimeter cables, and personal-fall-restraint systems.

**Control the fall so that it does not injure a worker** — Controlling a fall is the least effective fall-prevention strategy because it does not eliminate the hazard and doesn’t prevent a fall from occurring. However, this strategy is appropriate when the other strategies are not feasible. Examples include personal-fall-arrest systems, positioning-device systems, and safety-net systems.

**Conclusion** — We need more than self-confidence for protection from falls. The best examples of protection include substituting safe work practices for risky ones, training workers how to work safely, and enforcing safe work practices on the jobsite. Safeguard against fall-related injuries by always using appropriate fall-protection. Actions speak louder than words when it comes to fall-protection.

Through the OSHA and Houston Fall Prevention Alliance, this Toolbox Talk was developed for informational purposes only. It does not necessarily reflect the official views of OSHA or the U.S. Department of Labor. July 2016.

The Houston Fall Prevention Alliance was formed by the below organizations to provide their members, and others, with information, guidance and access to training resources that will help them protect the health and safety of workers, particularly by reducing and preventing exposure to fall hazards in the construction industries and addressing fall related issues and understand the rights of workers and the responsibilities of employers under the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act). In developing this alliance, these organizations recognize that OSHA’s State Plan and On-site Consultation Project partners are an integral part of the OSHA national effort.





Houston  
Fall  
Prevention  
Alliance

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