

Don't Fall Short

AVOIDING COMMON YET PREVENTABLE FALL HAZARDS

BY BILLY SMITH

EVP Claims and Risk Management

NOW THAT THE first quarter of 2021 is behind us, it's an excellent time to take stock of your safety program and identify areas for continued education. Our risk management team has been busy tapping into current trends in the OSHA fine and violation area and using that information to better inform our insureds' risk management and safety approach for the remainder of the year. Construction Dive's article "Biggest OSHA Fines of Q1 2021," published in May, offers a closer look at the types of situations behind the biggest OSHA fines of the quarter.

According to the article, contractors were fined for fall protection, excavation, and trenching violations in addition to fatalities involving the use of aerial lifts. Of the seven OSHA fines of \$125,000 or more the article discusses, six involved fall protection to some extent. The OSHA standard dealing with fall protection in construction, 1926.501, was directly violated in at least one of these cases. Unfortunately, it seems that inadequate fall protection measures are all too common on job sites so far this year.

The prevalence of fall protection violations is not just a Q1 2021 issue. Fall protection is, in fact, a perennial problem. According to OSHA, falls are among the most common causes of serious work-related injuries and deaths. Their guidelines for reducing falls state that employers must set up the workplace to prevent employees from falling off of overhead platforms, elevated work stations, or into holes in the floor and walls.

Fall protection must be provided at

elevations of six feet or more in the construction industry. In addition, OSHA requires that fall protection be provided when working over dangerous equipment and machinery, regardless of the fall distance. Finally, 1926.1423(f) states that for assembly/disassembly work, the employer must provide and ensure the use of fall protection equipment for employees who are on a walking/working surface with an unprotected side or edge more than 15 feet above a lower level, except when the employee is at or near draw-works (when the equipment is running), in the cab, or on the deck.

The bottom line: it's the employer's responsibility to ensure compliance with OSHA rules depending on the workplace and work being performed.

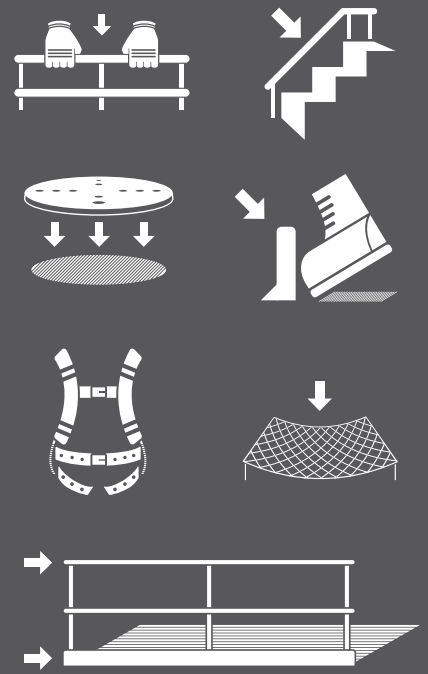
OSHA-MANDATED FALL-PREVENTION MEASURES

Last month, OSHA held their annual National Safety Stand Down on May 3-7, 2021. This yearly event offers employers a dedicated opportunity to talk with their employees about safety, specifically fall hazards and reinforcing the importance of fall protection. During the Stand Down, employers plan toolbox talks focused on fall hazards and fall prevention and conduct trainings on the topic. It's a great event that illustrates the truly crucial



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William (Billy) Smith is Executive Vice President of Claims and Risk Management at NBIS. Bill has over 40 years of experience in the crane, rigging, and construction industries including DOL-OSHA. He also serves on the ASME B30.5 standards sub-committee and is a nationally recognized leader and speaker on the topic of cranes, rigging, and related fields.



nature of addressing this topic constantly with your team. OSHA states that training must be continuous and documented, so why not implement a bimonthly fall-prevention training session? You could also direct your employees to complete online courses on the topic. NBIS' Online Safety & Health trainings, for example, offer a simple way for your workers to brush up on this topic from their phone or tablet anytime they have the opportunity.

Remember that the Q1 2021 OSHA violation trends clearly illustrate that not only is fall protection a safety concern but a risk management concern as well. Not meeting OSHA requirements exposes you to fines and citations as well as puts your team at risk of injury or even death. Preparation often means prevention, so be sure that your plan for helping your team avoid fall hazards is firmly in place and consistently executed.

PREPARATION IS THE BEST DEFENSE. LET NBIS HELP.
REACH OUT TODAY AT **NBIS.COM** OR BY CALLING **(877) 860 - RMSS (7677)**.

**COVERAGES: GENERAL LIABILITY | PROPERTY/INLAND MARINE
COMMERCIAL AUTO | EXCESS/UMBRELLA | PHYSICAL DAMAGE
CUSTOM CARGO/TRANSIT | WORKERS' COMPENSATION**