

Tools for Life – Weekly Health & Safety Meeting



Home Healthy - Home Safe

Date: September 2023

Accessing Heights Safely

Workplace injuries resulting from falling from heights are a significant occupational hazard with potentially severe consequences. Such accidents can lead to fractures, head injuries, spinal damage, and even fatalities. Factors contributing to these injuries include inadequate fall protection, improper use of equipment like ladders or scaffolds, unstable working surfaces, and lack of training. Preventing these injuries requires strict adherence to safety protocols, proper training, provision of appropriate equipment, regular inspections, and reinforcing the Apollo culture.

Falls from ladders accounted for a substantial number of occupational fatalities. In 2019, falls from ladders resulted in 138 fatalities, contributing to a significant portion of total fall-related deaths. Additionally, Apollo has experienced a recent increase in substantial injuries from working off ladders. These include missed steps while ascending or descending, not securing extension ladders and overreaching.

The Apollo Safety and Operations organizations are currently working to refresh Apollo safety expectations and requirements for Accessing Heights Safely. The challenge to you will be to identify the safest method to access work at heights with a focus first on the most stable elevated work platform available such as compact portable manlifts or scaffolding. The use of ladders should be your last option, all other options must be explored before selecting the use of a ladder.

HEALTHY OR SAFETY REMINDER: Apollo requires fall protection in all aerial lifts including scissor lifts.

Key to this effort will be following some essential guidelines for safely accessing heights:

Assessment and Planning: Begin by assessing the task. Determine the height requirements and the tools or equipment needed. Plan the work carefully, considering factors like the type of structure, environment, and potential hazards.

Proper Equipment Selection: Choose the appropriate equipment for the job, such as scaffolds, or aerial lifts. Ensure equipment is in good condition, rated for the intended load, and appropriate for the height.

Training and Competence: Only trained and authorized personnel should work at heights. Ensure workers are knowledgeable about equipment operation, safety procedures, and emergency protocols.

Fall Protection: Use fall protection equipment when working at heights where there's a risk of falling. This may include harnesses, lanyards, lifelines, and anchor points.

Guardrails and Toeboards: Install guardrails along platforms and open edges to prevent falls. Use toeboards to prevent tools and materials from falling.

Scaffolds: Erect scaffolds on stable ground and follow manufacturer instructions. Regularly inspect scaffolds for stability and potential issues.

Aerial Lifts: Operate aerial lifts according to manufacturer instructions. Ensure workers are trained in safe operation and emergency procedures.

Ladders (LAST OPTION): Follow ladder safety guidelines **AISH 17**, including proper placement, angle, pre-use inspection, and weight capacity. Maintain three-point contact while climbing and avoid overreaching.

Weather Awareness: Avoid working at heights during adverse weather conditions like high winds or storms.

Communication: Maintain clear communication between workers on the ground and those at height. Use signals, radios, or other means to convey information effectively.

Tool and Material Handling: Secure tools and materials to prevent them from falling. Use tool lanyards or containers to keep items within reach

Emergency Response: Have an emergency plan in place, including rescue procedures for workers at height. Ensure workers know how to respond in case of an emergency.

Regular Inspections: Conduct regular inspections of equipment and structures. Address any issues promptly to prevent accidents.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): In addition to fall protection, provide appropriate PPE like helmets, gloves, and eye protection. Remember, safety should always be the top priority when accessing heights for work. By following these guidelines and choosing ladders as your last option for accessing heights, you can create a safer work environment and reduce the risk of accidents or injuries.