Plan. Fall Protection – Secure it

A fall from any elevated work surface can result in serious injury or even death. To prevent these injuries and fatalities, construction workers must recognize the potential hazards of working at heights and know how to properly use fall protection equipment.

Focus on the fall prevention hierarchy before you start working at heights. Here is the hierarchy in order from the least dangerous to the most dangerous:

1. Eliminate the hazard entirely. Avoid working at heights by doing the work away from the edge or bringing it to ground level whenever possible.
2. Minimize the hazard by using a barrier system, like guardrails, to prevent anyone from being directly exposed to falling.
3. Finally, if no other option is available, utilize a personal fall arrest system. This means knowing how to use the equipment and how to tie-off safely and properly.

Before using any fall protection gear, inspect your equipment. Look for frayed webbing, cuts in lanyards, defective snap hooks, and other signs of wear. Just because you wore the harness last week doesn't mean it's still in good shape today.

Next, put on all the gear properly and adjust all the straps so that everything fits snugly and comfortably. Be sure to tuck in your straps. Your lanyard should be attached to the D-ring located between your shoulders. Remember that the shock absorber attaches to the harness and the snap hook attaches to the anchor point.

When using a harness, be sure you understand how to properly calculate the potential fall clearance distance to avoid contact with a lower level. Remember to consider the length of the lanyard and shock absorber, as well as the elasticity of the harness and the lanyard. Add all that up to be sure you have determined a safe fall clearance distance.

When thinking about anchor points, consider the following elements:

- **Height**: Does the anchor point height reduce free fall to the shortest distance possible?
- **Location**: Will swinging after a fall be reduced to a reasonably safe minimum in order to reduce the potential for injury?
- **Shape**: Is the anchorage point compatible with the attachment method?
- **Strength**: Has the anchor point been designated as an engineered anchor point or certified by an engineer?
- **Usage**: How many workers can be safely attached to the same anchor point?
- **Stability**: Has attachment to the lip of an I-beam flange been prohibited?
- **Independence**: Are the anchor points independent?