



## **Don't Let Gravity take you Down**

We all know the saying “What goes up must come down”. But you’ve probably heard it so often that you ignore the idea or find it meaningless. The fact is that you spend lots of time “going up,” and how you “come down” makes a world of difference. You can purposely and carefully climb down a ladder, or you can accidentally and painfully fall down to a level below.

Gravity is a force that affects our every move, and we should never underestimate its power. Your carelessness with gravity can cause falls that result in injuries and even death. The U.S. Department of Labor lists falls as one of the leading causes of traumatic occupational death, and the number of fatal falls in the construction industry continues to increase. Since we can't change the law of gravity, we have to learn to work safety at heights.

The first steps to reducing or eliminating falls involve identifying fall hazards and knowing how to protect yourself from them. Anytime you work at a height of 6 feet or more, you're at risk of suffering a fall injury, so you need to use fall protection. You should also keep in mind that regardless of the fall distance, fall protection must be worn when you work over dangerous equipment or machinery.

Let's discuss some safe work practices that will help you prevent falls and make sure gravity doesn't take you down:

- Keep workplaces clean, orderly, and dry. Make sure cords, hoses, and debris are kept out of walkways and adjacent work areas.
- Look for all potential tripping and fall hazards such as unprotected floor openings or edges, shafts, skylights, stairwells, and roof openings or edges before starting work.
- Inspect all fall protection equipment for signs of damage or defects before each use.
- Select, wear, and use fall protection that is appropriate for the work task.
- Wear slip-proof footwear on the jobsite.
- Never exceed the weight limit of any ladder or platform you use.
- Secure and stabilize all ladders before climbing onto them. Use the right ladder for the job.
- Never stand on the top two rungs or steps of a ladder. Don't carry tools or other materials while climbing up or down a ladder.
- Use handrails when you go up or down stairs.



Gravity can make you fall, and it can also make objects fall on you. To avoid injuries caused by falling objects, make sure all tools and materials stored on elevated surfaces are piled, stacked, or racked so that they won't tip, fall, collapse, roll or spread. Use toe boards and wear your hardhat.

### **SAFETY REMINDER**

**The Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries of the Bureau of Labor Statistics identified roofs, ladders, and scaffolds as the most common fall locations.**