



Illinois Center for Injury Prevention

Falls as a Work Place Hazard

Falls that occur at work are typically categorized into three categories - falls on the same level, falls to lower level and slips, trips. Some high risk industries for falls are construction, shipyards and longshoremen, utilities and tree trimming. In 2011, fatal falls, slips or trips accounted for 666 worker deaths, or about 14% of all fatal work injuries. Falls to a lower level accounted for 541 of those fatalities, with about 57% of these falls occurring from 20 feet or less and 21% from 30 feet or greater. Additionally, of the 385 work related fatalities among females and 4,308 deaths in males, in which 14% were from falls for women and 15% for males. Nearly half of all deaths from falls occur in the construction industry.

In Illinois, falls, slips or trips was the third leading cause of occupational fatalities, with falls being the leading cause of death in the manufacturing industry (50%) and construction industry (47.6%) in 2011.

Falls also account for a number of non-fatal occupational injuries. Non-fatal injuries that resulted from falls accounted for about 23% of all reported occupational injuries in 2010. In Illinois, the private industry reported 15.2% (6,060) of all reported injuries and illnesses were falls on the same level, 5.5% (2,210) were slips and trips and 3.9% (1,550) were falls to lower level in 2010. For state government employees, 40 falls to lower level were reported, 320 falls on same level, and 120 slips, trips. For local government employees, there were 340 falls to lower level, 1,520 falls on same level, and 370 slips, trips.

Hazards

Primary hazards causing fall related deaths are:

- excavation sites and holes
- forms and scaffolding
- hoist areas
- around leading edges
- bricklayer
- precast concrete erection
- ramps, runways and walkways
- roofing
- any wall opening in high rises, especially before windows are put in place

Prevention Measures

Primary prevention measures are:

- guardrails
- fall arrest systems and training on how to use them
- anchors, connectors and body belts or harness
 - deceleration device or lifeline
 - safety net
- visual warning line systems
- covers
- training on potential hazards and safety devices