



CICA – Vic / Tas Branch Crane Safety Bulletin #330 March 2024



Greetings all. Today's Bulletin is focussing on falls from heights.

In the construction industry, a persistent and grave threat exists- falls from heights.

Construction sites are inherently risky environments, with workers often operating at elevated positions, making them susceptible to accidents that can have severe consequences.

The Grim Statistics

WorkSafe Victoria recently launched a *Falls from Heights* campaign, in response to the alarming things they are seeing on worksites.

They stated: "There have been four fatalities and almost 500 injury claims caused by falls from heights in the construction industry during the last 12 months. Falls from heights remain the leading cause of death and serious injury in the construction industry."

The [consequences of these falls can be devastating](#), ranging from broken bones to severe head injuries and even fatalities.

Common Causes

Several factors contribute to falls from heights in the construction sector:

1. **Lack of Proper Guardrails and Fall Protection Systems:** Inadequate safety measures, such as missing or improperly installed guardrails and fall protection systems, significantly increase the risk of accidents.
2. **Unstable Working Surfaces:** Construction sites often involve working on scaffolding, ladders, or other elevated platforms. If these structures are unstable or not properly maintained, they become potential hazards.
3. **Human Error:** Workers may disregard safety protocols, fail to use personal protective equipment (PPE), or engage in risky behaviour, increasing the likelihood of accidents.
4. **Poor Training:** Insufficient training on proper safety procedures and equipment operation can lead to mistakes and accidents, especially for inexperienced workers.

Preventive Measures

To address the alarming rates of falls from heights in the construction sector, WorkSafe has created a variety of resources to help you understand the safety controls and how to prevent injuries and fatalities from falls from heights on your worksite. Learn more: www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/fall-prevention

Where possible, ask whether the work can be done on the ground or a solid construction.

If the work needs to be done at a height, it is crucial to implement comprehensive preventive measures:

1. **Safety Training:** Providing thorough and ongoing safety training for all construction workers is paramount. This includes instruction on proper use of equipment, adherence to safety protocols, awareness of potential hazards and what to do if something does happen.
2. **Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Ensuring that workers have and consistently use appropriate PPE, such as harnesses, hard hats, and non-slip footwear, can significantly reduce the severity of injuries in the event of a fall.
3. **Regular Equipment Inspections:** Rigorous and regular inspections of scaffolding, ladders, and other elevated work platforms are essential. Prompt repair or replacement of damaged equipment can prevent accidents. Use a fixed or portable ladder or implement administrative controls.
4. **Implement Guardrails, Scaffolding, Work Positioning and Fall Protection Systems:** Installing proper guardrails, scaffolding or elevation platforms and fall protection systems is a fundamental step in reducing the risk of falls from heights. Installing a fall arrest system to limit the risk of injuries in the event of a fall.
5. **Collaboration and Communication:** Foster a culture of collaboration and open communication on construction sites. Encouraging workers to report unsafe conditions without fear of reprisal enables quick resolution of potential hazards.



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To find out more about your legal duties and how to comply, download a copy of *A Guide to Falls Prevention* from WorkSafe [here](#).

When you watch [Pat and John's story](#), you see the lived experience and how a fall can happen in seconds, but the consequences can last a lifetime.

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