Working at height toolbox talk

29 CFR 1926.501, 1926.502, 1910.28, 1926.503, 1910.30

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

Where on this job could someone fall to a lower level today, and what is stopping them?

Why it matters

Falls do not only happen on big jobs. A quick task on a roof, a deck or a platform edge can be just as dangerous. Open edges, uncovered holes, weak surfaces and harnesses that are not checked are hazards we can control before anyone goes up, because there is no time to fix them during a fall.

Key points

1. **Know when fall protection kicks in**
   In construction, a worker on a surface with an unprotected side or edge 6 feet or more above a lower level must be protected by a guardrail, a safety net or a personal fall arrest system. In general industry, the trigger is 4 feet (29 CFR 1910.28(b)(1)(i)). Ladders, scaffolds and lifts have their own rules, so check before you go up.
   29 CFR 1926.501(b)(1)

2. **Check the surface before you trust it**
   Before anyone works on a roof, deck or platform, the employer must determine that it has the strength and structural integrity to support workers safely. Rotted decking, fragile roof panels and skylights can give way without warning. If you are not sure a surface will hold you, stay off it and ask.
   29 CFR 1926.501(a)(2)

3. **Cover and protect every hole**
   Holes, including skylights, are easy to miss. In construction, workers must be protected from tripping or stepping into or through holes by covers. A good cover is secured so it cannot slide and marked so nobody pulls it up for scrap. Never stand or sit on a skylight.
   29 CFR 1926.501(b)(4)(ii)

4. **Inspect your harness every time**
   In construction, a personal fall arrest system must be inspected before each use for wear, damage and other deterioration, and defective parts must come out of service. In general industry, the check is required before first use on each shift (29 CFR 1910.140(c)(18)). Check the webbing, stitching, buckles, D-rings, snaps and lanyard. Tie off only to an anchorage meant for fall arrest, never to a guardrail.
   29 CFR 1926.502(d)(21)

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5 **Watch what falls, not just who falls**

When workers are exposed to falling objects, each one must wear a hard hat. The employer must also use toeboards, screens or guardrails, a canopy, or a barricaded area below. Keep tools tethered and materials back from the edge.

29 CFR 1926.501(c)

6 **Plan the rescue before the fall**

A worker caught by a harness still needs to be reached quickly. In construction, the employer must provide for prompt rescue after a fall, or make sure workers can rescue themselves. In general industry, the employer must provide for prompt rescue of each worker who falls (29 CFR 1910.140(c)(21)). Know the plan before you clip in, not after.

29 CFR 1926.502(d)(20)

Scenario

Picture this: a small crew is finishing a roof on a commercial building. The guardrail along one edge was taken down to land a load of materials and never put back. One worker steps back to look over the layout, close to the open edge, while another is untangling a harness that nobody checked this morning. What should happen before anyone goes back to work up there?

Crew discussion

1. Where are the open edges, holes and skylights on this job right now?
2. Who checked their harness and lanyard this morning, and what did they look for?
3. If someone falls and is hanging in a harness, how do we get them down quickly?
4. What near misses have we had with edges or holes, and did we fix the cause?

Bottom line **Before you go up, know what protects you from a fall, check your gear, and make sure every edge and hole is protected.**

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema Working at heights / Trabajo en alturas

Date / Fecha _____

Trainer / Instructor _____ Location / Lugar _____ Company / Empresa _____

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