

Safety Sense

Protect Yourself From Falls

(NAPSA)—Every day, more than 150 Americans are injured after falling from heights. Here's how you can avoid becoming part of this painful statistic.

The Problem

Many falls from height result in injury or death because fall protection gear wasn't used properly or at all.

What To Do

If you or someone you care about has a job, a hobby or a household chore that requires climbing, it's wise to remember that fall protection is essential when working more than four feet above the ground (over six feet above the ground in the construction industry).

What To Ask

Here are four questions to consider:

1. When you climb, do you maintain 100 percent tie-off? That means climbers are always connected to a restraint or fall-arrest system and to the structure they're climbing. One of the most common and most dangerous misuses in climbing among both industry veterans and new workers is disconnecting at height from their fall protection to transfer to another point or work area.

2. Do you believe the "six-foot rule"? There is a myth that people who stay six feet or more from an unprotected side or edge of a structure—such as a house under construction—don't need fall protection. The apparent logic behind this misconception is that the berth between a person and the fall hazard is wide enough to eliminate the risk of falling. The fact is, physical space does not help prevent falls. Workers can unconsciously come too close to an unprotected edge in the course of their workday or slip and slide off an edge.



Proper precautions can help keep you safe from falls at home and at work.

3. Do you wear the right-size harness? Fall-arrest harnesses are only effective if they fit well. The harness must also be properly adjusted, fitting snugly without causing discomfort.

4. Do you have an escape and rescue plan? According to a recent survey conducted by 3M Fall Protection, 20 percent of companies don't have an escape and rescue plan. For those that do, it might involve calling 911. Unfortunately, emergency responders often lack the proper equipment or training to rescue a person suspended at height. The wait time for rescue can be highly dangerous because the average time until the onset of the initial symptoms of suspension trauma is between five and 20 minutes.

Expert Advice

"Falls are easily preventable by following a few basic safety precautions," explained Ray Mann, Fall Protection Technical Service, 3M. "So gear up with the appropriate safety equipment."

Learn More

To see why using fall protection equipment is just as important as other safety equipment such as seat belts, life jackets and bike helmets, visit www.3M.com/FallProtection and watch the video called "Make it Home."