
OSHA: TOP FOUR CONSTRUCTION HAZARDS

1. Prevent Falls

- Wear and use personal fall arrest equipment.
- Install and maintain perimeter protection.
- Cover and secure floor openings and label floor opening covers
- Use ladders and scaffold safely.

2. Prevent Struck-By

- Never position yourself between moving and fixed objects.
- Wear high-visibility clothes near equipment/vehicles.

3. Prevent Caught-In/Between

- Never enter an unprotected trench or excavation 5 ft. or deeper without a protective system in place; some trenches under 5 ft. deep may also need such a system.
- Make sure the trench/excavation is protected either by sloping, shoring, benching or trench shield systems.

4. Prevent Electrocutions

- Locate and identify utilities before starting work.
- Look for overhead power lines when operating any equipment.
- Maintain a safe distance away from power lines; learn the safe distance requirements.
- Do not operate portable electric tools unless they are grounded or double insulated.
- Use ground-fault circuit interrupters for protection.
- Be alert to electrical hazards when working with ladders, scaffolds or other platforms.

GREEN JOB HAZARDS

Green jobs are being defined broadly as jobs that help to improve the environment. These jobs also create opportunities to help revitalize the economy and get people back to work. Green jobs do not necessarily mean that they are safe jobs. Workers in the green industries may face hazards that are commonly known in workplaces – such as falls, confined spaces, electrical, fire, and other similar hazards. These hazards may be new to many workers who are moving into fast-growing green industries. Additionally, workers may be exposed to new hazards which may not have been previously identified. For example, workers in the solar energy industry may be exposed to Cadmium Telluride, a known carcinogen, if adequate controls are not implemented.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act) requires employers to comply with safety and health standards and regulations promulgated by OSHA or by a state with an OSHA-approved state plan. In addition, the Act's General Duty Clause, Section 5(a)(1), requires employers to provide their employees with a workplace free from recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious physical harm. In the absence of an OSHA standard, OSHA can enforce the General Duty Clause. OSHA standards cover many of the hazards in green industries and employers must use the necessary controls to protect workers. Click on the industry icon on this page to get more information about some of the hazards in the industry and the OSHA standards that may apply.

A key concept for all industries, but especially those that are just beginning to grow, is "Prevention through Design (PtD)" – designing the process/equipment in a way that eliminates hazards to the workers who use them. Employers should have a system in place where safety and health professionals work with design engineers in "designing out" hazards throughout the design phase of their products. See NIOSH's efforts on PtD and its blog on green jobs.

OSHA is committed to helping workers and employers ensure that green jobs are safe jobs. See Assistant Secretary Michael's remarks from National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's Going Green Workshop. Read about Dr. Michaels' participation in the U.S.-Canada-European Commission Trilateral Roundtable on the Employment Dimension of the Transition to a Green Economy.



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MONTHLY TOOLBOX TALK

How much do you know about your new job site to make you safe?

SAFETY ON A NEW JOB SITE...

It's important for you to remember that most accidents are caused by carelessness or thoughtlessness--yours, or someone else on the job. When an accident occurs, it is because someone has failed to foresee that it could happen. If you think ahead of the possible hazards likely to confront you, you can plan how to avoid them. When starting work at a new job site, size up the situation and think of ways to prevent accidents and keep the job safe.

Take time to evaluate your share of the work as soon as you arrive on the site. Ask your supervisor to explain any phase of the job that you do not understand. If you are working with a new employee, be sure to explain the work to be done and be sure that he/she is qualified to do the work. This will allow you to work safely with this person and prevent accidents.

Always check that you have the necessary tools and equipment required to do the job. Use tools only for the purpose they were designed for. Repair and replace immediately any defective tools such as chisels with mushroomed heads, wrenches with sprung or spread jaws, hammers with split handles, etc. Inspect the wiring of all electrical hand tools to be sure they are equipped with a three-prong grounded plug. Power tools with frayed or broken insulation on wires should be taken out of service until repaired. When using ladders, make sure that they are in good shape with no broken or missing rungs. Never use aluminum ladders when working around electricity. Wear hard hats and other personal protective equipment when called for on the site. When using scaffolding, make sure that it is properly set up with scaffold grade planks and good, stable footing. Do not work on scaffolding that is shaky or missing components.

Remember, a job is only as safe as each person makes it. If each employee will take nothing for granted, check all tools and equipment for safe operation, keep the job neat and follow company rules, they will be contributing to the safety of themselves and their fellow workers.

Don't just talk about it, be about it! Be Safe.