

**Top 10 Neglected Construction Site Safety and Health Concerns-What are you doing to address them?** With so many risks on the job, it is no surprise that construction workers are more prone to serious injuries and fatalities, than other industries. As a result, employers must continually strive for workplace safety compliance and most importantly, their employees' health and vitality.

**#1 Scaffolding** -Workers assigned to scaffolding jobs should be properly trained and continually aware of their environment as falling debris, electrocution from power lines, and falls related to unstable platforms can result in serious injuries. Supported and suspended scaffolds should be properly outfitted with guardrails to prevent workers from falling from an open side, and workers should be secured in appropriate fall protection. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), scaffolds and scaffold components must be capable of supporting at least four times the maximum intended load.

**#2 Fall protection** -All employees whose work conditions include the danger of falling should undergo fall protection training regularly. Company training courses should identify specific hazards and familiarize employees with all fall protection equipment used in the workplace. A review of the written prevention and rescue plan should also be conducted regularly. Fall protection equipment should be inspected each time it is used and by a qualified person once every year, and that inspection should be documented. The equipment should be inspected according to manufacturer's recommendation and OSHA requirements. In addition, a thorough visual inspection for signs of stress and wear should be performed every time a harness is used.

**#3 Ladder safety** - The misuse of portable ladders can lead to injuries such as sprains and broken bones, head and neck trauma or even death. Ladders should be secured and safely positioned at appropriate angles and prior to use be visually inspected for damaged components including hinges, rungs/steps, side rails and feet. Side rails should extend at least 3 feet above the landing and be secured at the top to a sturdy support. Portable ladders should be used in compliance with the weight standard they are designed to hold and should also comply with OSHA standards as specified in 29 CFR 1926.1053(a)(1).

**#4 Proper Respirator Use** - OSHA has established a respiratory protection standard covering detailed procedures for reducing and eliminating respiratory hazards. The specifications of these standards can be found in OSHA regulations 29 CFR 1910.134. All measures for respiratory protection are required to adhere to these standards, so it is important that employers understand them before determining the best course of action for upgrading workplace respiratory safety.

**#5 Personal Protective Equipment-** PPE is worn to reduce employees' exposures to occupational hazards and is required to be available on-site by OSHA and employers are responsible for providing it. Employers are ultimately responsible for determining the level of PPE their

employees use through a written hazard assessment. Hard hats, eye, ear and hand protection, earplugs and other protective equipment provide protection from falling objects, head injuries, sparks, dust/fragments and burns.

**#6 First aid and fire safety-** It is common sense that first aid and fire safety are key programs on any given job site. However, many sites lack enough first aid kits and eyewash stations. Similarly, fire extinguishers should be kept in ample supply, regularly inspected and used for the type of fire they are effective on. Workers should be trained about fire hazards on the construction site and what to do in an emergency. Fire emergency plans should outline the assignments of key personnel, provide site-specific evacuation routes and be reviewed regularly.

**#7 Confined spaces** -Working in confined spaces can be an inconspicuous risk, as fatalities most often occur due to invisible circumstances such as oxygen-deficient, toxic or combustible atmospheres. Also known as permit-required confined spaces, they should be tested prior to entry and continuously monitored using a properly configured and calibrated monitor. Specific requirements for permit required confined space entry can be found in 29CFR1926.1200-1213, Subpart AA.

**#8 Recordkeeping-** Maintaining up-to-date records of equipment inspections and injury logs is not only required by OSHA, but is also the best way to protect employers from legal ramifications in the event of injury and death.

**#9 Welding safety** - Welding injuries, from minor flash burns to eye injuries, can be painful and cause disfigurement or career-ending disabilities. Wearing the proper PPE is an easy way welders can protect themselves against these risks and preserve their livelihood. Welding helmets should be equipped with the proper filter lens in either a passive or an auto darkening style to shield against the arc's bright light. In addition, airborne hazards should also be assessed and the necessary engineering controls implemented to maintain acceptable exposure levels using ventilation, fans or fume extractors.

**#10 Training** -The key to preventing many workplace accidents and injuries is frequent and effective employee training programs. These programs exist for virtually all construction safety components. In addition to provide on-the-job training there are a number of voluntary training programs available through OSHA, Trade Organizations and the National Safety Council.



## GETTING READY FOR WINTER WEATHER WORK

Here are some reminders about dressing for the weather and staying strong, healthy, and safe this winter.

### **Frostbite and Hypothermia**

- Hypothermia is a potentially fatal condition caused by loss of body temperature. For example, exposed skin can start to freeze at just 28 degrees Fahrenheit (-2 degrees Celsius) and deep frostbite can cause blood clots and even gangrene.
- Symptoms include fatigue, nausea, confusion, lightheadedness and profuse sweating. Without medical treatment the victim can lose consciousness and die.

### **Wear the right gloves for the work you are doing.**

- Gloves should have enough insulation to keep you warm and prevent frostbite, but be thin enough so you can feel what you are doing if you are manipulating controls or tools.
- Gloves which are too thick can also make your hands and wrists work too hard trying to hold on to objects, causing possible repetitive strain injury.

### **Dress in Layers**

- Layers of lightweight clothing keep you warmer than a single layer of heavy clothes.
- Remove layers as necessary to prevent overheating and perspiring, which can lead to chills or hypothermia later.
- Wet clothing is 20 times less warm than dry clothing.
- Wear a hat. As much as half your body heat can go up in steam off the top of your head.
- Protect your ears from frostbite (wear a hat that will cover your ears or use ear muffs).
- Check your winter wardrobe for entanglement hazards such as scarves, loose sleeves, and dangling drawstrings. Basically, anything that could get caught in rotating machinery.

### **Eye Protection**

- Keep your safety eyewear from fogging up in the cold.
- Use anti-fog coatings and wipes that are appropriate for your eyewear.

### **Footwear**

- Look at the soles of your winter footwear. Your shoes or boots should have adequate tread to prevent slips and falls on wet or icy surfaces.
- Slow down when walking across slippery surfaces and be especially careful on ladders, platforms and stairways.

### **Eat Up!**

- This does not mean a high fat diet, but one with enough calories and nutrients to give you the fuel you need. Always start with a hearty breakfast.

### **Rest**

- Get plenty of rest. Working in the cold and even traveling to and from work in the winter takes lots of energy. Be sure to pace yourself when shoveling snow.

Did you know that 70 % of deaths during snow or ice storms occur in vehicles? It pays to carry blankets or sleeping bags, matches, candles, a snow shovel and sandbags, a flashlight, and non-perishable food such as cereal bars, in case a winter storm sidelines you in your vehicle.

