

Guidance

Managing Work to Control and Mitigate Falling Objects

Managing work and how it is undertaken is important not only for the financial success of a business, but also for quality and safety purposes. Nowhere is this more important than in the arena of working at height. This scope of work possesses some inherent risks that make work-related accidents much more likely. And because of the many specific factors involved in work at height, job site accidents have the potential to be extremely serious when compared to other types of industry activity that work at ground level. This makes proper job management and control extremely important.

The government's work at height regulations specifically state that companies engaged in working at height address their first responsibility of maintaining worker and employee safety. Any company that puts productivity or other factors before safety is in violation of the law. In other words, work at height demands that the company's first priority would be to take the appropriate measures to insure that the workers and their tools are safe and secure from falling. It also requires that areas underneath the work drop be cordoned off and made it inaccessible to non-permitted or the general public.

Good Management Requires Good Managers and Positive Attitude

While it's generally true that strong site management requires good managers, it is more important when it comes to safety and working at height. Managers need to be individuals who have attention to detail, the ability to foresee potential problems far-off, the creativity to find solutions to those potential problems, and the willingness to follow the law at all costs. Managers of this calibre are indeed difficult to find in today's workplace. When a company does find such an individual, he is an invaluable member of the team in both protecting the corporate veil and the workers safety.

Even so, managers and supervisors who possess all of the skills listed above still need appropriate training themselves to be competent. Their training should consist of necessary learning skills, ideally being relative to the activity and how to best utilize the appropriate safe systems, tools and resources available to them. It should cover everything from planning and control, inspections to the practical use of suitable systems. When a manager is fully competent and well-trained, he becomes one of the best assets a company as for ensuring worker safety.

Job Control Day-To-Day

While the law requires reasonably practicable management and control of work sites by certified competent people, good job supervision practices dictate that activities are closely controlled and reviewed on a regular basis. Depending on the type of job, risk and the number of workers involved, that may mean a weekly inspection; other circumstances may dictate a daily inspection of the safe use of appropriate equipment in-line with the specific tasks and methodology. Regardless, the best managers will develop a schedule of their own which ensures safety without unnecessarily hindering productivity.

Another aspect to professional task control is to observe workers on a day-to-day basis. A supervisor who routinely assesses his workers and job hazards and how they are performing is more prepared to identify potential problems and fix them. On the other hand, a supervisor who sits in an office all day, paying no attention to what his workers are doing and how quickly things change is one who is inviting potential disaster. These types of supervisors have no business working on an at height locations due to the associated dangers.

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Strict Use of Fit for Purpose Safety Equipment

Mitigating the potential for falling objects requires that workers strictly adhere to the specific guidance and controls set out for safety equipment which has been put in place. Requiring whenever safety systems are carefully chosen for a particular at height operation, this is done with consideration to the scope of activity and the individual handle configuration of tools being used.

For example, under most circumstances it would be inappropriate to use a light weight rated tool lanyard designed to be worn on a workers tool belt to secure a very heavy, hand-held impact hammer. This type of tool is too heavy for a standard tool lanyard and poses the very real potential of breaking the lanyard if the tool is ever dropped. So consultation is advisable with a manufacturer to ensure the chosen equipments performance is fit for purpose.

In addition, when workers have to move tools from one location to another the correct safety procedures must be used. For example, moving a hammer from a tool belt to a tool bag mounted on scaffolding must be done in such a way as to ensure that it is always secure during transfer and that collective risk is eliminated. The employee who does not follow proper safety procedure is putting himself and others at risk by not doing so. This means that job control and management requires supervisors to constantly monitor what workers are doing.

Maintaining Proper Records and Documentation

One of the things least enjoyed by supervisors is the requirement to keep proper records and fill out paperwork. As boring and laborious as this might be, it is a requirement. Therefore accurate lists of all equipment being used, inspection and deficiency reports, and so forth are maintained. This paper trail is the only way to track tools and safety equipment life cycle, so it must be done.

In order to optimize control it is good for a management to learn how to handle relevant paperwork efficiently. The more organized and efficient a manager is, the less time his paperwork will consume and the more time he can spend monitoring the work being done. If a supervisor is disorganized and careless, he will undoubtedly spend more time in his office than need be. He may also have a difficult time producing the required paperwork if it ever becomes necessary.

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Cooperation of Workers

Finally, job control and safety risk mitigation is made that much easier when supervisors have the cooperation of their employees. Part of worker safety training should include helping workers to understand and take responsibility for their cooperation benefits everyone involved. The more willing your workers are to cooperate with safety guidelines, the smoother the job site will run, and the safer everyone will be. That said job site managers cannot afford to be afraid to deal with uncooperative employees. Failure to do so could result in a tragic accident should the worker stops using the equipment or use it inappropriately.

In a best case scenario cooperative employees not only follow supervisor suggestions and safety rules, they also encourage other workers to do the same. When one worker takes it upon himself to encourage his fellow workers to be safe, the entire job site is better off. Therefore it is in the best interest of managers and supervisors to cultivate workers who are most cooperative. These are the types of individuals to whom supervisors can delegate more responsibility for greater job site performance.

When you consider the potential for injury, death, and financial loss, it's easy to see why job management and control is necessary to mitigate the risks of at height related accidents. With good management practices a workplace can remain virtually accident free most of the time. And while it's impossible to completely abolish accidents altogether, the more they can be reduced the better off we'll all be.

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