Fall Protection – Stats and Facts

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2016, 697 workers died in falls to a lower level, and 48,060 were injured badly enough to require days off of work. A worker doesn't have fall from a high level to suffer fatal injuries; 134 workers were killed in falls on the same level in 2016, according to *Injury Facts*. Construction workers are most at risk for fatal falls from height – more than seven times the rate of other industries – but falls can happen anywhere, even at a "desk job."

NSC data for 2016 includes falls from height and falls on the same level, by industry:

- Construction: 24,700 injuries, 384 deaths
- Manufacturing: 22,040 injuries, 49 deaths
- Wholesale trade: 10,250 injuries, 21 deaths
- Retail trade: 29,830 injuries, 29 deaths
- Transportation and Warehousing: 23,490 injuries, 46 deaths
- Professional and business services: 22,090 injuries, 111 deaths
- Education and health services: 43,660 injuries, 18 deaths
- Government: 63,350 injuries, 44 deaths

Most recent traumatic injury data show:

- 27% of the 900,380 nonfatal work injuries resulting in days away from work in 2018 were related to slips, trips, and falls[1]
- 235,740 injuries due to contact with objects and equipment in 2018 were so severe that they resulted in time away from work[1]
- In 2018, 1,276 U.S. workers died in work-related crashes involving motor vehicles (24% of all deaths)[2]
- Workers less than 25 years of age have higher rates of

occupational injuries treated in emergency departments than other age groups[3]

- An estimated 2.5 million workers sustained work-related injuries and were treated in emergency departments during 2018[4]
- In 2018, the rate[5] of emergency department-treated, work-related injuries was estimated at 160 per 10,000 full-time equivalent workers
- Male workers accounted for approximately 65% of the work-related injuries treated in emergency departments
- The three leading causes of work-related injuries treated in an emergency department were contact with objects and equipment, overexertion and bodily reaction, and falls, slips and trips without a fall

Slip and Fall Statistics 2017

- 697 workers died in fall-related accidents in 2016
- 48,060 were injured severely enough during a fall to require days off work
- In 2016, 9.2 million people required emergency room treatment from fall-related injuries
- Falls are the number one cause of death for adults 65 and older

Slip and Fall Injuries

- More than 33,000 people died from falls in 2015.
- The National Safety Council's Odds of Dying list ranks falls as the 6th most likely cause of death, with the odds of dying as 1 in 127.
- Falls are the most common cause of traumatic brain injuries.
- Falls are the leading cause of non-fatal medically treated injuries in the U.S.
- Each year, over 8 million emergency room visits are due to slips, trips, and falls.
- Falls are the leading cause of injury-related death for adults age 65 and older.

Falls at Work

- In 2016 there were 229,240 nonfatal cases involving falls, slips, trips; the lowest since 2014.
- In 2016 there were 849 fatal work-related falls, slips, and trips (in all sectors), with an increase every year since 2011 with 681.
- Services, wholesale, and retail trade industries account for 60 percent of slip and fall accidents.
- At 25 percent, slip and fall injuries are the most frequently reported work accidents.
- Falls are the primary cause of lost time at work.
- 22 percent of falls result in more than 31 days of missed work.

Falls happen. In Canada, more than 40,000 workers get injured annually due to fall accidents. This represents a significant chunk of "lost-time injuries" accepted by workers' compensation boards or commissions across Canada. In addition to great economic loss, falls cause pain and suffering and also claim lives.

Despite prevention efforts, workers continue to fall because:

- working conditions such as poor lighting, slippery walking surfaces, and poor housekeeping practices exist;
- protective devices like guardrails are missing;
- equipment such as ladders and scaffolds are in poor condition or not used properly;
- fall-protection equipment is not available, not used, or is misused; and
- work practices are poor due to unclear job procedures, lack of training for workers and workers rushing and taking short-cuts to meet deadlines.

Falling down on the job

In Ontario alone, 10 people died due to workplace falls in 2013. Each of these workers' families lost a spouse, brother, sister, son, daughter or parent as a result of the fall. Other workers suffered critical injuries such as broken limbs and backs, cracked ribs and head injuries.

All too often, we fail to recognize there is a problem or a potential problem until someone falls in our workplace, or we hear/read in/on the news that someone else has died or been seriously injured as a result of a workplace fall. Don’t rely on luck or good fortune to protect you. All workplaces have a risk of fall injuries – whether they are same-level falls or falls from heights. Unless slip, trip and fall hazards are identified, assessed and controlled, workers will continue falling down on the job.

It’s the law

The ideal method of fall prevention is the elimination of all fall hazards in the workplace. Realistically, this is seldom possible. However, occupational health and safety laws require employers to take every reasonable precaution to protect workers, provide information and instruction and ensure that workers properly use or wear any required equipment. Employers, supervisors and workers can be prosecuted for not complying with the law.

- A roofing contractor was fined $10,000 and jailed for 90 days when a worker fell 21 feet without fall arrest equipment.
- Another company was fined $100,000 when a worker fell from an unstable ladder and died as a result of his injuries.

KEEP IN MIND

Falls are among the most common causes of serious work related injuries and deaths. Employers must set up the work place to prevent employees from falling off of overhead platforms, elevated work stations or into holes in the floor and walls.

Employers must set up the work place to prevent employees from falling off of overhead platforms, elevated work stations or into holes in the floor and walls. OSHA requires that fall protection be provided at elevations of four feet in general industry workplaces, five feet in shipyards, six feet in the construction industry and eight feet in longshoring operations. In addition,

OSHA requires that fall protection be provided when working over dangerous equipment and machinery, regardless of the fall distance.

To prevent employees from being injured from falls, employers must:

- Guard every floor hole into which a worker can accidentally walk (using a railing and toe-board or a floor hole cover).
- Provide a guard rail and toe-board around every elevated open sided platform, floor or runway.
- Regardless of height, if a worker can fall into or onto dangerous machines or equipment (such as a vat of acid or a conveyor belt) employers must provide guardrails and toe-boards to prevent workers from falling and getting injured.
- Other means of fall protection that may be required on certain jobs include safety harness and line, safety nets, stair railings and hand rails.

OSHA requires employers to:

- Provide working conditions that are free of known dangers.
- Keep floors in work areas in a clean and, so far as possible, a dry condition.
- Select and provide required personal protective equipment at no cost to workers.
- Train workers about job hazards in a language that they can understand.

At **US Fall Protection**, we have found that our customers are not looking so much for products but rather solutions. And that is exactly what we pride ourselves in supplying. We offer risk assessment, risk control advice, engineering/design, fabrication, installation, system certification, comprehensive training, and annual inspections to ensure worker safety and legislative compliance. Simply put, **US Fall Protection** is your one stop shop for all height related risks.

Working at heights doesn’t have to be dangerous. The right fall protection system can ensure safety and regulatory compliance. **US Fall Protection**‘s mission is to take the danger out

of working at heights in a way that doesn’t sacrifice worker productivity. Whether horizontal, vertical, along inclines, or overhead, **US Fall Protection** will keep you safe. In fact, limiting liability by eliminating risk is in our blood. It is simply who we are and what we do.

Slip & Fall Quick Facts

- Fall fatalities are nearly equally divided between men and women. However, more women will experience a slip-and-fall accident. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, falls accounted for 5% of the job-related fatalities for women compared to 11% for men.
- Falls account for over 8 million hospital emergency room visits, representing the leading cause of visits (21.3%). Slips and falls account for over 1 million visits, or 12% of total falls.
- Fractures are the most serious consequences of falls and occur in 5% of all people who fall.
- Slips and falls do not constitute a primary cause of fatal occupational injuries, but represent the primary cause of lost days from work.
- Slips and falls are the leading cause of workers’ compensation claims and are the leading cause of occupational injury for people aged 55 years and older. If you are thinking about making a workers’ compensation claim then you might want to take a look at using someone like the house of workers compensation lawyers to help you with your claim.
- According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), floors and flooring materials contribute directly to more than 2 million fall injuries each year.
- Half of all accidental deaths in the home are caused by a fall. Most fall injuries in the home happen at ground level, not from an elevation.
- Of all fractures from falls, hip fractures are the most serious and lead to the greatest health problems and number of deaths. The following statistics describe the slip-and-

fall crisis affecting our nation’s elderly.

- Each year in the United States, one of every three persons over the age of 65 will experience a fall. Half of which are repeat fallers.
- According to the CDC In 2005, more than 15,000 people over the age of 65 died as a result of a fall. Up from 7,700 a decade earlier.
- The CDC also reports that approximately 1.8 million people over the age of 65 were treated in an emergency room as a result of a fall.
- For people aged 65-84 years, falls are the second leading cause of injury-related death; for those aged 85 years or older, falls are the leading cause of injury-related death.
- Incidence of falls goes up with each decade of life.
- Of all deaths associated with falls, 60% involve people aged 75 years or older.
- Falls account for 87% of all fractures among people over the age of 65 and are the second leading cause of spinal cord injuries and brain injury symptoms.
- Half of all elderly adults (over the age of 65) hospitalized for hip fractures cannot return home or live independently after the fracture.
- Falls represent 40% of all nursing home admissions and are the sixth leading cause of death among people aged 70 years or older.
- Over 60% of nursing homes residents will fall each year.
- According to The National Institute on Aging, every year 30% of people over the age of 65 will sustain a fall, of which 10% will result in a serious injury.
- 67% of fall fatalities are among people aged 75 years or older.
- People over the age of 85 are 10-15 times more likely to experience a hip fracture than are people aged 60-65 years.
- 85% of worker’s compensation claims are attributed to employees slipping on slick floors (Industrial Safety & Occupational Health Markets 5th edition)
- 22% of slip/fall incidents resulted in more than 31 days away from work (US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2002).

- Compensation & medical costs associated with employee slip/fall accidents is approximately $70 billion annually (National Safety Council Injury Facts 2003 edition).
- Occupational fatalities due to falls are approximately 600 per year down from 1200 during since the 1970s.
- Total injuries due to falls estimated at $13-14 million per year in U.S. Falls are the number one cause of accidental injury, resulting in 20.8 percent of all emergency room visits in 1995. (Motor vehicle accidents accounted for 11.9 percent of ER visits.)
- Disabling (temporary and permanent) occupational injuries due to falls are approximately $250,000-$300,000 per year.
- Falls occur in virtually all manufacturing and service sectors. Fatal falls however are in construction, mining and certain maintenance activities.
- According to Workers Compensation statistics from ITT-Hartford Insurance Company, falls account for 16% of all claims and 26% of all costs. This compares to 33% of costs associated with sprains and strains.
- According to the American Trucking Association, slips and falls are the leading cause of compensable injury in the trucking industry.
- Falls from elevation (approximately 40% of compensable fall cases, approximately 10% of occupational fatalities).
- Falls on the same level (approximately 60% of compensable fall cases). (W. Monroe Keyserling, Ph.D. 2000)

Falls are 100% Preventable

Whether working from a ladder, roof or scaffolding, it’s important to plan ahead, assess the risk and use the right equipment. First, determine if working from a height is absolutely necessary or if there is another way to do the task safely.

- Discuss the task with coworkers and determine what safety equipment is needed
- Make sure you are properly trained on how to use the equipment
- Scan the work area for potential hazards before starting the

job
- Make sure you have level ground to set up the equipment
- If working outside, check the weather forecast; never work in inclement weather
- Use the correct tool for the job, and use it as intended
- Ensure stepladders have a locking device to hold the front and back open
- Always keep two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand on the ladder
- Place the ladder on a solid surface and never lean it against an unstable surface
- A straight or extension ladder should be 1 foot away from the surface it rests on for every 4 feet of height and extend at least 3 feet over the top edge
- Securely fasten straight and extension ladders to an upper support
- Wear slip-resistant shoes and don’t stand higher than the third rung from the top
- Don’t lean or reach while on a ladder, and have someone support the bottom
- Never use old or damaged equipment; check thoroughly before use

Employer responsibility

Employers must implement and use comprehensive fall-protection programs to reduce the risk of injuries. At a minimum, employers should:

- Become familiar with applicable legislation, codes and standards;
- Incorporate safety in work planning;
- Identify all slip, trip and fall hazards at the worksite;
- Put a fall-prevention program in place, including a company policy that outlines rules for housekeeping, lighting, inspections, etc.;
- Train employees in recognizing and avoiding unsafe conditions – how to clean up spills, use fall-protection equipment, install guardrails and use covers on holes in the

floor, etc.;
- Provide written procedures for tasks involving fall hazards;
- Ensure that employees know, understand and follow procedures;
- Be clear and vigilant in their health and safety responsibilities and those of their supervisors – they must ensure that rules are followed;
- Provide appropriate protective equipment for employees and train them in its use;
- Continuously evaluate the fall-prevention program, ensuring that policies and procedures are working. If not, improve them;
- If a fall-related incident takes place, investigate it immediately, learn from it, and eliminate the cause; and
- Document all fall-prevention efforts.

Accidents waiting to happen?

Falls can be prevented. Workers aren’t falling because they are clumsy, careless or accident-prone. Workers are falling because of poor workplace conditions. Close examination of floors, walkways, catwalks, stairs, scaffolds, ladders, truck beds, rail-car floors, outdoor yards and all other working or walking surfaces will likely reveal hidden slip, trip or fall hazards. The good news is that once they are revealed, they can be controlled.