Scaffolding Topped OSHA's 2009 Safety Violations List

Scaffolding violations topped the list of OSHA violations in 2009, with 9,093 violations cited. OSHA says scaffold accidents most often result from planking or supports giving way, or because of employees slipping or being struck by falling objects.

According to OSHA, the number of top 10 violations has increased by almost 30 percent compared to 2008.

The other top OSHA violations cited during 2009 were as follows:

2. Fall protection: 6,771 violations. OSHA says any time workers are at heights of four feet or more, they are at risk for falling and need to be protected. Fall protection must be provided at four feet in general industry, five feet in maritime industry and six feet in construction.

3. Hazard communication: 6,378 violations. Chemical manufacturers and importers are required to evaluate the hazards of the chemicals they produce or import and they must prepare labels and safety data sheets to convey the hazard information to their downstream customers.

4. Respiratory protection: 3,803 violations. Respirators protect workers against insufficient oxygen environments, harmful dusts, fogs, smokes, mists, gases, vapors and sprays. These hazards may cause lung cancer, lung impairment and other diseases or death.

5. Lockout/tagout: 3,321 violations. Lockout/tagout refers to specific practices and procedures to safeguard employees from the unexpected startup of machinery and equipment, or the release of hazardous energy during service or maintenance activities.

6. Electrical (wiring): 3,079 violations. Working with electricity can be dangerous. Engineers, electricians and other professionals work with electricity directly, including working on overhead lines, cable harnesses and circuit assemblies. Other employees,

including office workers and sales people, work with electricity indirectly and may also be exposed to electrical hazards.

7. Ladders: 3,072 violations. Occupational fatalities caused by falls remain a serious public health problem. The US Department of Labor lists falls as one of the leading causes of traumatic occupational deaths, accounting for eight percent of all occupational fatalities from trauma.

8. Powered industrial trucks: 2,993 violations. Each year, tens of thousands of injuries related to powered industrial trucks (forklifts) occur in US workplaces. Many employees are injured when lift trucks are inadvertently driven off loading docks, lifts fall between docks and unsecured trailers, workers are struck by lift trucks or when workers fall while on elevated pallets and tines.

9. Electrical (general): 2,556 violations. (See point number six above).

10. Machine guarding: 2,364 violations. Any machine part, function or process that may cause injury must be safeguarded. When the operation of a machine or accidental contact injuries the operator or others in the vicinity, the hazards must be eliminated or controlled.