Work Wisely Around Water

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Hardhats, goggles, earplugs—these are standard items of personal protective equipment (PPE) required for many jobs.

If you work around open water, however, you must consider some other types of PPE, both to keep you out of the water and to keep you alive if you do fall in.

By following all safe work procedures and by having the correct protective equipment in place, you can protect yourself from drowning.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

For those who work around docks, ships, lagoons and dams, you should be protected by railings. If you see any problem with the condition or the design of these guards, talk to your supervisor right away.

When you first report to work on a job around water, locate these two lifesaving devices so you can reach them quickly in an emergency:

1. The life preserver ring. Attached to a rope, this ring can be thrown in the water in an emergency for someone to grab.
2. Water-edge ladders. These ladders leading out of the water should be located at intervals along the edge of the water.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Fall prevention and fall arrest equipment will also help keep you out of the water. Use this equipment correctly when working over water on jobs such as construction and painting.

Another type of PPE to prevent falls into the water is the correct

footwear. Non-slip soles should be worn wherever there is danger of a fall from a dock or deck. In the forest industry, caulked boots are worn when walking on log booms.

When you are on board a watercraft, the kind of flotation gear you wear can make a difference in your survival. A personal flotation device is designed to keep you on top of the water. A lifejacket is designed to keep your face out of the water in case you are unconscious. Talk to your supervisor about the correct gear to use for your particular on-board job.

It’s also a good idea to learn how to swim. Not only is swimming a good form of exercise and recreation, it may help save your life one day.

FINAL WORD

If you work around the water, learn all you can about the equipment designed to keep you safe and dry.