

# Working from Heights – Don't Fall for these Seven Deadly Mistakes

## Safety Talk

### What's At Stake ?

Falls from heights injure or kill at least one worker every day in North America. In the construction industry, falls are the leading cause of worker fatalities in both the United States and Canada. If you are lucky enough to survive a fall, you are often left disabled, paralyzed, or unable to work or enjoy activities outside of work with your family and friends.

### What's The Danger ?

Falls can occur from ladders, scaffolds, roofs or other elevations. They are a risk faced daily by construction workers, painters, window washers, firefighters, and anyone else who works at heights.

You don't have to be very high off the ground to die from a fall. In fact, more than 50 percent of fall deaths in the construction industry occur from falls of 20 feet (6 metres) or less. That's about the height of a common job site extension ladder.

### Seven Deadly Mistakes:

1. Improper ladder selection, setup and use.
2. Using defective ladders and protective equipment.
3. Not wearing proper fall protection equipment.
4. Forgetting to inspect ladders and equipment before use.
5. Working in areas where protective devices such as warning lines, guardrails and covers on floor and wall openings and around skylights and at roof edges, are missing.
6. Using scaffolds that have not been constructed by trained

scaffold erectors and inspected regularly by a competent person.

7. Not following the safe work practices and training provided to you by your employer.

## **How to Protect Yourself**

1. Choose the right type, length, and rating of ladder for the job and set up the ladder correctly each time.
2. Look for loose or missing hardware and rungs on ladders, as well as rust, corrosion or other damage to the rungs, side rails and other parts of the ladder.
3. Report missing guardrails, floor covers or warning lines and don't work in that area until it's safe to do so.
4. Wear fall protection equipment when it is required. Wear it consistently and wear it properly. If you have questions about when or how to wear it, ask your supervisor.
5. Inspect harnesses and lanyards for damage to the webbing and stitching. Look for frayed edges, broken fibres, pulled stitches, cuts, burns, or chemical damage. Broken webbing strands generally appear as tufts on the webbing surface.
6. Remember to inspect the metal parts of fall protection equipment for distortion and sharp edges. Check for pitting or cracks that show signs of chemical corrosion.
7. Finally, never use fall protection equipment that has already saved a worker. Any equipment, including ropes, involved in a fall must be replaced.

## **FINAL WORD**

By not falling for the seven deadly mistakes, using the right equipment for the task, and following safe work practices, you can work safely from heights.