

VOLTS Newsletter

VALUING OUR LIVES THROUGH SAFETY

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Fall Protection

In 2000, Buck Rockafellow had been working in the trades for about two years as an iron worker. After high school, Buck played college baseball for two years when he realized that he didn't have the ability to go any further in the sport; so he entered the trades. His grandfather, father, and two uncles were or had been iron workers and had made good livings, so it was natural for Buck to slide into that profession.

On June 8, 2000, 22-year-old Buck was on the 3rd floor of a building construction site while his cousin was on the 5th floor. It was lunch time and raining, so everyone headed to the ground floor for lunch and a break. As Buck worked his way around the building to make his way to the zoom boom (human occupied crane basket that lifts you up and down the floor levels on a construction site) and head down to lunch, he unhooked his fall protection and took a long step onto pan decking (some metal that has an oily film on it). When he made the step, he lost his footing on the slick, oily surface and fell 33

feet to the ground. His cousin heard the tools hit first and immediately knew it was Buck who had fallen. He ran over to Buck and started giving him CPR—which saved Buck's life.

Buck broke 18 bones, collapsed a lung, broke his pelvic bone in three places, and dislocated three fingers—his pinky never straightened out. Mentally, Buck was also injured and felt sorry for himself asking “why me?” Buck had a hard fight for five or six years to overcome the mental challenges from his accident. Buck was a medical miracle—especially since they didn't expect him to live through the first night. **The average fall to cause death is 10 feet** while Buck had fallen 33 feet! After being hospitalized for five weeks, he was finally moved to the rehab floor. The patient in the room next door, a carpenter, was paralyzed from the neck down as the result of a 6-foot fall. Buck considered himself lucky to be able to walk after his fall.

Buck is now a construction foreman that is adamant about safety with his crew, never cuts corners, and always makes good decisions

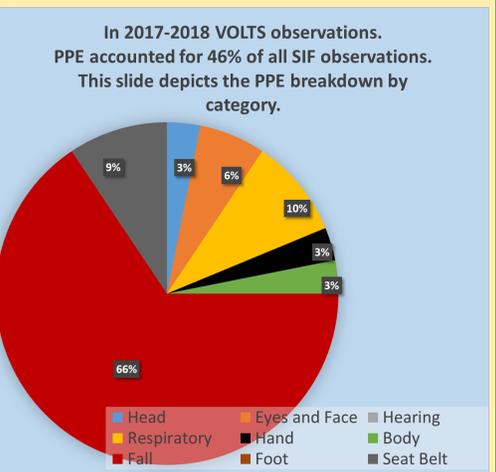
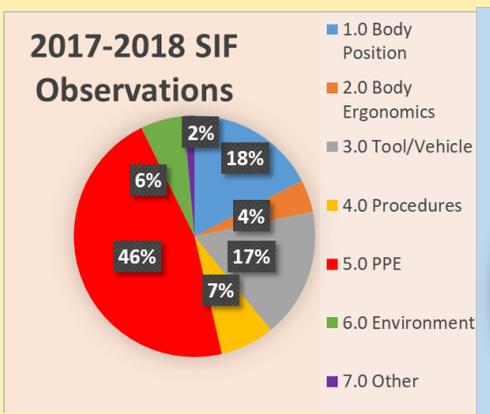
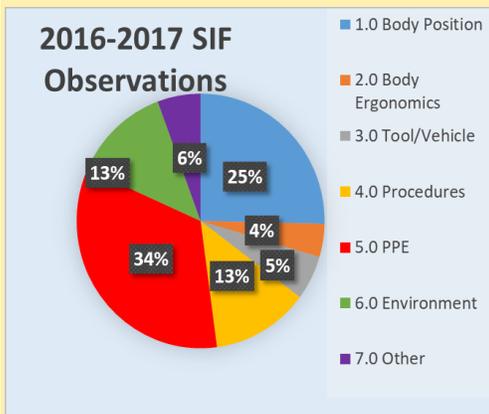
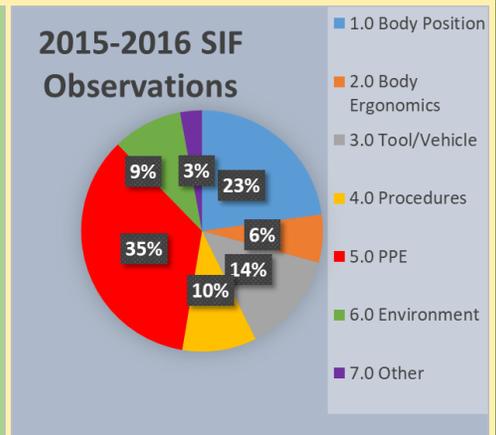
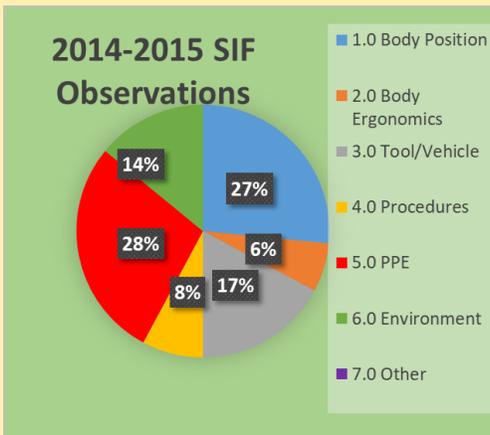
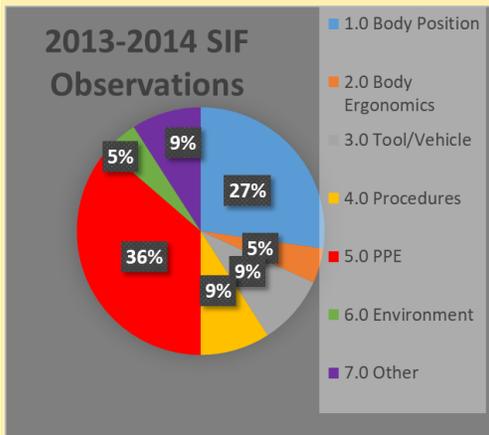
when it comes to safety. Buck’s advice to all of us is to live life by the second; not by the hour, not by the day, week, month, or year—life can be taken away from you by the second. Ask yourself, “If I do this, what’s the worst thing that can happen?”

While on the job, take at-risk observations seriously. Even though you may get away with unsafe actions, those decisions hold the potential for serious injury or death. Our safety process can’t sit idly by and watch...or today’s exposures may become tomorrow’s injuries.

Choices and Consequences

As you consider the major choice that led to Buck’s injury, (being unhooked from fall protection for a brief second) think of the potential that lies in a quick, poor decision.

Do we, as employees, understand and consider injury “potential” or do we focus instead on the fact that “I got away with doing it this way last time, so I bet I can get away with it this time”? What we are really saying is, “I’ll bet my life that I can get away with this unsafe action again.”



Use Your PPE

When the VOLTS Steering Committee met in January, we examined the SIF (serious injury or fatality) observations for the last five years. As you can see, the frequency of potential PPE injuries is increasing. Since PPE is easy for each person to control and its frequency of occurrence gives us—as a Steering Committee—great concern, we want to share these pie charts with you.

You can tell that 66 percent of last year’s SIFs were in the fall protection category. An easy way to improve your odds of going home safely at the end of every shift is to wear your fall protection 100 percent of the time. Don’t let something that is so easy to control wind up removing you prematurely from your own “movie reel”!