

VOLTS Newsletter

VALUING OUR LIVES THROUGH SAFETY

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Fall Protection

Looking at the VOLTS data report that Casey Draper puts out each month, there are a couple of things from the December report we, as a VOLTS Committee, would like to point out. First of all, great job on having 5,903 safe work practices observed. We want to recognize how many times employees actually performed their tasks in a safe manner. This is a great accomplishment.

During December 2018, 98 at-risk behaviors were noted—continuing a trend of 50 percent of the at-risk behaviors coming from the PPE category. Month after month in 2018, PPE had more at-risk behaviors identified than any other category. As a VOLTS Committee, we feel that PPE is a category that could and should be controlled by making better decisions. There is definitely room for improvement during 2019. Last month's data showed too many at-risk behaviors for falls. For this reason, it was decided to have this month's VOLTS newsletter address fall protection.

Why is fall protection important?

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

What can be done to reduce falls?

The best way to reduce falls is to prevent them from ever happening. This is done by:

- Guard every floor hole into which a worker can accidentally walk (using a railing or toe-board or a floor hole cover).
- Provide a guardrail and a 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), guardrails and toe-boards must be provided in order to prevent workers from falling or getting injured.

- Other means of fall protection that may be required on certain jobs include safety harness and line, safety nets, guardrail systems, ladders, man lifts, scissor lifts, etc.

Personal fall arrest systems are designed as a backup safety system for an individual during a work task. In the event of an emergency, fall protection equipment should function automatically to help protect the worker from harm and serious injury.

OSHA requirements include:

- Providing working conditions that are free of known dangers.
- Keeping floors in working areas in a clean and a dry condition as much as possible.
- Selecting and providing required personal protective equipment.
- Training workers about job hazards in a language that they can understand.

Brett Wardle shared a list of fall protection terms that workers should be familiar with:

1. Personal fall arrest system means a system used to arrest an employee in a fall from a walking-working surface. It consists of a body harness, anchorage, and connector. The means of connection may include a lanyard, deceleration device, lifeline, or a suitable combination of these.
2. Lanyard means a flexible line of rope, wire rope, or strap that generally has a connector at each end for connecting the body belt or body harness to a deceleration device, lifeline, and anchorage. Cannot be tied back to themselves. Can come in double or single leg.
3. Lanyards should be attached to the harness with the shock absorber end connected to the D-ring on the harness.
4. Double lanyards are needed for 100 percent tie-off ability.

5. D-ring means connector used:

- a. In a harness as an integral attachment element or fall arrest attachment.
- b. In a lanyard, energy absorber, lifeline, or anchorage connector as an integral connector.
- c. In a positioning or travel restraint system as an attachment element.

6. Anchorage means a secure point of attachment for equipment such as lifelines, lanyards, or deceleration devices capable of supporting at least 5,000 pounds for each employee attached; or designed, installed, and used, under the supervision of a qualified person, as part of a complete personal fall protection system that maintains a safety factor of at least two.

7. Personal fall protection systems must be inspected before initial use during each work shift for mildew, wear, damage, and other deterioration. Defective components must be removed from service.

8. Personal fall protection systems must be worn with the attachment point of the body harness located in the center of the employee's back near shoulder level.

9. Fall protection is required whenever an employee is exposed to a four-foot or greater fall hazard.

Fall protection saves lives. It is as simple as that. Choose to be here with your loved ones. Wear and request others to wear and use proper fall protection each time it is needed. Always request the type of equipment needed to perform your task safely. We can take the time for safety.

