

Inspection Focus 4: Fall Protection


OBLIGATION TO USE FALL PROTECTION & THE FALL PROTECTION HIERARCHY


WorkSafeBC will be focusing on regulation [11.2 Obligation to Use Fall Protection](#) related to working at heights which focuses on the overarching requirements of using fall protection and the Employer's responsibilities which include, but are not limited to, ensuring written plans, inspections, training and supervision are in place.

SUMMARY OHSR 11.2 OBLIGATION TO USE FALL PROTECTION


It is important to review the Workers Compensation Act (WCA) and Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (OHSR) for a full understanding of requirements for compliance and ensuring a safe workplace. In summary, OHSR 11.2 requires performing arts & live event workplaces to:

FALL PROTECTION AND THE FALL PROTECTION HIERARCHY

 Ensure fall protection systems are being used when a fall of 3 m (10 ft) or more may occur, or a less than 3 m (10 ft) fall involves a risk of injury greater than the risk of injury from the impact on a flat surface (i.e. hazardous material, impalement etc.)

 Ensure that the fall protection hierarchy is used to mitigate risk of worker injury in the most effective method possible, the fall protection hierarchy explains that:

- Where possible, eliminate fall hazards by working from the ground
- If not practicable to eliminate fall hazards, use guardrails that meet the requirements of [Part 4 \(General Conditions\)](#)
- If not practicable to use guardrails, using a fall restraint system that prevents the workers from approaching the edge
- If not practicable to use fall restraint systems, using a fall arrest system or rope access system, note that fall arrest and rope access systems have additional regulations that are required to be followed which include, but are not limited to, written plans, additional training, rescue procedures and inspections
- If not practicable, or will result in a hazard greater than if a fall arrest system or a rope access system was not used, it is to be ensured that work procedures are followed that are acceptable to WorkSafeBC and minimize the risk of injury to a worker from a fall

 Workers must be made aware of fall hazards and must be instructed in the fall protection systems and procedures in place, workers are responsible for following the systems, instructions and training provided

QUICK TIPS

Identify locations and work tasks that require fall protection

Use the fall protection hierarchy to effectively mitigate fall hazards, remember that additional regulations exist with respect to training, inspections, written plans, and rescue procedures when working from heights and using fall protection systems

Ensure workers have valid fall protection training and are made aware of locations/tasks where fall hazards exist

Ensure equipment is compatible and suitable for use by supporting the required forces, and the equipment is inspected and maintained in good working order



Check out ActSafe's website for more information on safely working from heights and using fall protection.

- [Courses & Workshops](#) are available for Fall Protection
- [Additional resources](#) are available for working at heights along with other topics and departments to assist with complying with the applicable workplace safety legislation and ensuring a safe workplace

HIERARCHY OF FALL PROTECTION

The Hierarchy of Fall Protection is the preferred order of control to eliminate or reduce fall hazards. This methodology mirrors common safety practices for hazard reduction beginning with elimination and ending with administrative controls. Using the data collected from the fall hazard assessments, each solution in the hierarchy can be applied to each hazard.

DEFINITION: HIERARCHY OF FALL PROTECTION

A ranked or graded series of fall protection solutions ranging from the best solution to the worst. In order of best to worst, these solutions are: Hazard Elimination, Passive Fall Protection, Fall Restraint, Fall Arrest, and Administrative Controls.

1. HAZARD ELIMINATION

The preferred solution to all fall hazards is elimination. The reason for exposure to the fall hazard is challenged and evaluated to determine if a change in the procedure, practice, location or equipment will eliminate exposure to the fall hazard. Specifying lighting or video screens equipment be located on the ground, or in an equipment room rather than by the edge of the roof, is an example of hazard elimination.



BEST PRACTICE

The hierarchy should be applied to any hazard before purchasing inappropriate equipment or systems. By evaluating a fall hazard using the hierarchy, the best solution is often very evident.

2. PASSIVE FALL PROTECTION

Physical barriers like guardrails around unprotected edges and covers over holes are examples of passive fall protection.

Passive protection is generally considered to provide a higher level of safety since the opportunity for error is less than using personal protective equipment (PPE). The initial costs of passive protection, while possibly high, are often more efficient than the long-term costs of PPE. However, passive protection may not be warranted if the frequency and duration of exposure to the fall hazard is limited.

An exhaustive hazard assessment provides the information needed to make these kinds of decisions to maximize cost-effectiveness.

3. FALL RESTRAINT SYSTEMS

Fall restraint systems are erected in such a manner that a fall cannot occur. Fall restraint systems use PPE to restrict the worker's range of movement so they cannot physically travel to the fall hazard.

Fall restraint systems are often underutilized because they are not specifically mentioned in many regulations, but they are preferred over fall arrest systems. Free fall distance is not an issue for fall restraint systems, therefore arresting forces, clearance requirements, secondary injuries, and rescue issues are virtually eliminated.



BEST PRACTICE

When possible fall restraint is generally better than fall arrest. Fall restraint systems prevent most secondary injuries due to the fall and make rescue easy since the worker is still accessible.

4. FALL ARREST SYSTEMS

Fall arrest systems are erected in such a manner that a fall can occur but the fall is arrested within acceptable force and clearance margins.

Fall arrest systems have a higher risk associated with them, since we have to stop the falling worker within an acceptable level of force and prevent him/her from contacting the surrounding structure or the ground.

Training for both fall restraint and fall arrest systems is key.

ANSI Z359.2-2007 includes a significant amount of information about fall protection training for authorized persons, competent persons, qualified persons, rescuers and trainers.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS

Administrative controls are work practices or procedures that increase a worker's awareness of a fall hazard. It must be noted that administrative controls are the least preferred method of protection because they do not provide a physical or positive means of protection.

Administrative controls are preventive measures taken to reduce the likelihood of a fall. These methods include safety monitors, warning lines, warning horns, designated areas, or control lines. It must also be noted that OSHA regulates the use of many administrative controls and it is incumbent on the fall protection program administrator to understand the jurisdictions and regulations that apply.



FALL HAZARD SURVEY

The first step for effectively implementing the Hierarchy of Fall Protection is to perform a Fall Hazard Survey to identify and prioritize fall hazards and recommend options for hazard reduction based on regulatory requirements and fall protection standards.

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