Fall protection is a highly important topic, yet it is often ignored. Falling from elevated work locations has been a leading cause of injuries and deaths in the construction industry. Falls can hurt an employee both physically and emotionally.

During construction, developing and implementing safety programs can help prevent accidents. But what happens afterward?

After construction is complete, a building will require routine or nonroutine maintenance. This maintenance may include, but is not limited to, unclogging drains, cleaning windows, and skylights, repairing and inspecting equipment installed at rooftops, etc.

As an employer, ask yourself this question: Have we provided a safe workplace for the workers performing these construction and maintenance activities? The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) sets standards and regulations to protect workers. However, due to lack of knowledge about these requirements, people don't always follow them. This puts both the employee and the employer at risk. You can avoid this risk by proactively putting enough fall protection in place.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that during the period of 2014 to 2021, falls to lower levels accounted for 13% of all the fatalities in all industries. To improve the fall protection in workplaces, the U.S. Department of Labor announced a new national emphasis program. This will allow OSHA to initiate inspections whenever they observe someone working at heights.

According to OSHA, this will hold the employers accountable to provide safe working conditions for their employees. The program targets both construction and maintenance activities. To improve overall on-site safety, we all need to be more conscientious about the seriousness of fall hazards. We can all save lives. Below are answers to some common questions about fall hazards and ways to protect against them.

How Does OSHA Define a Fall Hazard?

California, fall hazards start at 30 inches in general industry workplaces. Please review the state requirements along with federal requirements.

Additionally, OSHA also requires fall protection when working over dangerous equipment and machinery, regardless of the fall distance.

What are the Best Ways to Protect Workers from Falls?

Fall protection can be achieved by using one of the following methods:

» ***Active fall protection*** — This is a fall-protection system that workers need to actively engage with, such as safety tieback anchors, lifelines, safety tracks, etc. This is recommended when the work is not routine, since it involves competence of the worker, training, and

categorize these systems as “fall-arrest systems” (systems used to arrest a fall in case the fall occurs) or “fall-restraint systems” (systems that do not allow workers to fall and restrains them from falling).

» ***Passive fall protection*** — This is a fall-protection system that workers don’t need to actively engage with, such as parapets and guardrails. The preference is to use these in routine m paraen-USThe prefer schorslo(e)ÐsEMC /P 6n2CD Ø en the work is not roiTÐTEM6 0 0 10 45 8.1mina is a fal Tm

What Other Safeguards Can be Built During Construction that Improve Overall Safety?

elevated work locations. While employees can use portable ladders to access those work locations, OSHA recommends

errors while setting up portable ladders. Some states that use

or roof hatches to provide access to elevated work locations.

addition to access to work locations, you should also consider an exterior building maintenance system (EBM), or the "window cleaning system." Using ground-based equipment such as ladders, water-fed poles, or aerial lifts to clean the windows are only safe to certain heights with certain safety precautions

slope too great for certain ground-based equipment? -ipmen1 ( )14 (y)11 (ou051s4/MCD 120 B5MCD 3BT/TT0 1 Tfbstrucsaf)11a1.1 (ers.)7

About the Author

on numerous projects designing and implementing solutions to the unique