

AT THE END OF THE WORKDAY, EVERYONE GOES HOME SAFE.

Struck-by Hazards: Falling Objects

Toolbox Talk



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Struck-by hazards are a common cause of injuries to construction workers. They occur so often that OSHA has struck-by hazards as one of the Focus Four topics to eliminate in order to keep construction workers safe. While there are several ways a person can be injured by struck-by hazards, today we will focus on just one: falling objects.

“Anytime work is done above an employee...a struck-by hazard is possible.”

Anytime work is done above an employee—whether it be on a ladder or a ten-story building—or if an employee is working where materials or equipment are above them (like an excavation) a struck-by hazard is possible. With struck-by hazards so common, what can we do to avoid them? We can take several measures to prevent harm to others, as well as a critical precaution to prevent harm to ourselves.

To keep materials from falling onto someone, keep materials a sufficient distance from the leading edge. Materials stored on rooftops or buildings should be kept at least six feet away from the leading edge. When removing and storing dirt from an excavation, be sure to keep the spoil piles at least two feet

away from the edge of the excavation.

If you are going to be working above someone with tools, it is best to have the tool tethered to you. This protects everyone on the job-site by allowing room for human error: if you drop the tool by accident, you can easily avoid an incident where someone working below you is struck by the tool.

Even if a tool is dropped or kicked near a leading edge, toeboards can further prevent an incident. Toeboards are often forgotten or left out as a standard safety measure because they add time and materials needed to complete jobs. Yet having toeboards in place adds an extra level of risk prevention, protecting materials, tools, and workers.

While all of these measures keep others on the jobsite safe from struck-by incidents, the most obvious precaution to protect oneself from a struck-by incident is to always wear a hard hat when on a jobsite.

Incident Profile:

Let's take a look at an accident that happened on a construction site a few years back, but one we can all relate to.

During work on a four-story hotel, a tape measure was accidentally kicked off the third floor and struck a 55-year-old man. The tape measure was accidentally dropped when the owner of it missed hooking it onto his belt and dropped it onto the ground. While guardrails had been set up, no toeboards were in place. He was shuffling around when his foot contacted the tape measure, sending it three floors down. The 55-year-old man was walking back inside the building after grabbing supplies from his truck. The tape measure struck his hard hat and shoulder. He was transported to a local hospital where he was treated for pain and swelling.

Talking Points:

1. What saved this man's life? What could have prevented the incident entirely?
2. Do I wear my PPE correctly and when it is needed?
3. When are we exposed to falling objects on this site?
4. What precautions can we take to ensure nobody has a struck-by incident on this site?

