

# 15 THINGS SUPERVISORS CAN DO TO PREVENT FALLS



## 5 THINGS TO DO TODAY

### 1) Ask workers one question

Ask them “How many workers died from falls in Ontario construction in 2008?” The answer is ten. Your workers need to know that the problem of falls is serious. (Later this week, give your workers the quiz on page 15 of this issue!)

### 2) Check for missing guardrails

Guardrails are often the best form of fall protection because they keep workers away from the edge. Keep an eye out for missing guardrails on scaffolds and floor edges. Ministry of Labour inspectors will be looking out for them too.

### 3) Look out for ladders.

This year, the Ministry of Labour is focusing on how workers use

ladders. (See pages 8 and 9.) A lot of injuries involve ladders, but we use them so often that we get desensitized to the danger. Look for workers doing things that increase the risk of injury, such as leaning outside the rails, working off a ladder, or carrying something while climbing. There’s a ladder poster in this issue—put it up on your site!

### 4) Check for floor openings

Too many workers have died after walking backwards into a floor opening. Use a sturdy cover and write on it with spray paint to make its purpose clear. Alternatively, install guardrails around the opening and put up a sign. Use the floor-cover poster on page 19 of this issue to broadcast the message!

### 5) Give a safety talk

We’ve printed a safety talk on the inside front cover of this issue. There are more free ones on [www.csa.org](http://www.csa.org). Even better, talk to workers for five minutes about the specific hazards and fall-protection equipment used on your site. Walk the site with them, or meet in an area where you can see several fall hazards. Explain what you and your company expect.

## 5 WAYS TO SUPERVISE

### 1) Show that you mean it

More than anything else, your *actions* demonstrate your commitment to fall protection. Inspect your site every day. Point out the hazards. Suggest safer ways to do a job (e.g., using an elevating work platform instead of a ladder).

If all you talk about is productivity and deadlines, you encourage workers to cut corners. If your actions show that you care about your workers, you encourage them to protect themselves.

### 2) Plan your work

You and your company should consider ways to avoid work at heights. For example, assemble roofs on the ground and hoist them into place; order pre-fabricated wall frames or trusses; use extension handles on tools to

do painting or window-washing from the ground.

At the very least, think ahead a few days. List the tasks that workers will do at heights. Go to the jobsite ahead of time and look for fall hazards. Look for places where workers might use ladders, and order elevating work platforms instead. Prepare your equipment and other hazard controls in advance.

### 3) Train your workers

A competent person must train your workers on fall-protection basics, as well as the specific fall protection situations and equipment on your project. (CSAO's *Basics of Fall Protection* kit is not enough. You need to address the specifics of the work you'll be doing.)

The law requires you, as a supervisor, to inform your workers about the hazards on site. Knowing what to tell them becomes easy if you have a system in place. For example, do a job hazard analysis and then give your workers a safety talk to describe what you found.

Ongoing training and coaching are a part of your job. Put up posters, distribute CSAO stickers, and hand out safety talks. These reminders could save a life.

### 4) Enforce the rules

Enforce the Construction Regulation and your company's policies on fall protection. If workers are ignoring procedures—such as tying off on sloped roofs—insist that they follow the procedures and explain the



consequences of ignoring them again. Don't be afraid to take disciplinary action when necessary. Your company can't afford to tolerate workers who continue to put themselves, other workers, and the business at risk.

### 5) Reward good behaviour

Recognize workers who follow the rules. "Catch" workers doing something *right* and thank them for it. A small token of appreciation can make a person's day and reinforce good behaviour.

## 5 THINGS TO TELL YOUR WORKERS

#### 1) "Do it right every time."

"It will just take a minute" or "I have done this a hundred times before" can be a worker's last words. Your employees are paid to be professionals. That means doing the job safely each time, every time, and all the time.

#### 2) "Look out for other workers."

You *expect* them to fix a problem that endangers other workers—but they need to *know* that. They

should feel comfortable replacing a missing guardrail or a floor-opening cover, even if it's not in their work area.

#### 3) "Use the right equipment."

Your workers need to know that wearing the equipment you require is not an option. It's mandatory.

#### 4) "Tell me about the hazards you see."

The law requires workers to inform their supervisor of any hazards that can affect them or other workers. They should feel comfortable calling you if they face a confusing situation or can't control a hazard. It's in your best interest to find out *before* an injury happens—so you can prevent it—rather than afterwards.

#### 5) "Know your rights."

If a worker faces a fall hazard and does not have adequate protection, the worker has the legal right to refuse the work. It's better for everyone not to get to this situation in the first place. ☺