Safety Newsletter

March 2004

Safety: Don't Let it Fall Through the Cracks (continued on Page 2)

The greatest number of fatalities in the construction industry are attributed to falls. In order to prevent fall-related deaths and injuries, existing fall protection programs must be evaluated, or implemented if one is not already in place.

Because fall protection must be provided when work is performed six feet above the next lower level, employers must take care to keep written documentation on the training of each employee. Written documentation includes *plan documentation.* Plan documentation must be provided if employees are working on leading edges, precast concrete erection work, or residential construction work. These plans must be available on the jobsite and must be kept up-to-date . In addition, *equipment* (guardrails, safety net systems, controlled access zones, personal fall arrest systems) must also be made available. Finally, *protection from falling objects* must also be considered, through use of toerails, screens, and canopy structures.

The following are just a sampling of guidelines to remember for *fall protection checklists, guardrail systems, safety net systems, personal fall arrest systems*, and *other considerations*.

Fall Protection Checklists must be used on:

- Walking/working surfaces that are six feet or greater above a lower level
- Unprotected sides and edges, leading edge, form work and reinforcing, ramps and runways, falls into or onto dangerous equipment, wells, pits and shafts, holes or hoist areas, or edges of excavation is six feet or greater above a lower level. *(continued on Page 2, Column 1)*

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OSHA to Provide Training for IEC

OSHA has offered to provide training for IEC Chapters as a benefit of the IEC and OSHA Alliance. The training can be used to instruct IEC members or as an incentive to get prospective members to visit the regional chapter.

OSHA would like to hear from any IEC regional chapter wishing to take advantage of this offer. IEC member companies desiring OSHA safety training should contact their local chapter and ask the chapter to request the training as soon as possible (see e-mail contact below). Do not delay. There is no telling how long this offer may last due to government budget being redirected to national security projects.

OSHA would like to know the type of training desired, the number of workers expected at the training, approximate date of training, if a training facility is available, and the location of the city where the training is needed. Topics for training may include one of the following: 10 Hour OSHA Training course, Confined Spaces; Lock out-Tag out, Material Handling, Fleet Safety, Falls, Arc Fault and PPE requirements or you may request another needed safety topic. Safety training can be provided in English or Spanish. If you need more information or would like to request training, please e-mail John Masarick at: jmasarick@ieci.org or phone 703-549-7351.

2003 IEC National Safety Committee Members

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Kent Davis
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Carter Hicks
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John Thomas
Todd Hohn
Jack Martin
Robert Leonhart
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Safety: Don't Let it Fall Through the Cracks *(continued from Page 1)*

The Criteria for Guardrail Systems:

- Top rail strength must be able to bear 200 pounds of outward or downward pressure
- Top rail must be capable of deflecting 200 pounds at a height of 39 inches or higher
- The top rail height must be approximately 42 inches plus or minus 3 inches (if using stilts, the increase must equal stilt height)
- The top rail must have a smooth surface and minimum overhang at the ends
- Steel or plastic banding is not permitted for top or mid rails, which must be at least 1/4 inch in diameter
- Intermediate posts, if used, must be no greater than 19 inches apart
- Mid rails must be used when there is not wall or parapet 21 inches higher or more, and must be capable of sustaining 150 pounds of downward or outward pressure
- Screens must handle 150 pounds
- Ramps must have guardrails on all unprotected edges
- Manila, plastic and synthetic rope systems require continuous inspection
- Gates or offsets are required at all access holes

Criteria For Safety Net Systems:

- Must be installed within 30 feet or less to working surface
- When used with bridges, there must be an unobstructed fall area to the net
- There must be sufficient clearance between the net and surfaces below
- Safety nets must project a specified distance beyond the edge or work surface, based on the vertical distance from the working level to the horizontal plane of the net
- Net mesh sizes must be six inches or less
- Rope used for borders must have a breaking strength of 5,000 pounds
- Debris must be removed from the nets
- OSHA requires that all net safety systems be inspected regularly, to include after installation, whenever relocated, after any repairs, and every six months while system is in place

Criteria for Personal Fall Arrest Systems:

- As of Jan. 1, 1998, body belts are NOT acceptable as fall arrest systems
- Lanyards and vertical lifelines must have a breaking strength of 5,000 pounds
- Anchorage strength must be 5,000 pounds
- Self-retracting lifelines with a fall height of two feet or or more must have a strength of 3,000 pounds
- At least two qualified persons must supervise the use of horizontal lifelines
- Positioning devices have component requirements similar to fall arrest systems, with a free fall of two feet or greater and anchorage of 3,000 pounds

A Few Other Considerations:

- Personal fall arrest systems cannot be attached to guardrail systems
- Provide separate lifelines for each employee, with a maximum free fall distance of six feet or less without contact with lower surfaces
- The maximum fall force allowed on an employee can be no more than 900 pounds on a belt and 1,800 pounds on a harness
- Equipment must be inspected prior to each use
- Provide for prompt rescue from elevations

Enforcement

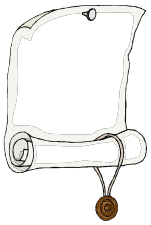
The FY 2005 budget maintains compliance safety and health officer strength at 1,123. IT provides funding for 37, 700 inspections, the same as FY 2003 and FY 2004. The budget proposal also includes $2 million in new funds to support whistleblower enforcement. OSHA is now responsible for investigating whistleblower complaints under 14 statutes, and the agency's workload has significantly increased. The agency averages 75 complaints annually under the Wendell H. Ford Aviation Investment and reform Act for the 21st Century (AIR 21).

Forklift Operations and Young Workers

OSHA has joined forces with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Wage and Hour Division of the Labor Department's Employment Standards Administration to increase awareness of the hazards associated with the operation of forklifts and the youth employment provisions that prohibit most workers under age 18 from operating forklifts. They have compiled an information packet on forklift safety and a brochure on compliance resources.

OSHA Selects IEC for VPP Pilot Program

IEC was selected as one of three associations to participate in an OSHA safety pilot program called "Challenge." Complete details of the program have not been worked out; however, those electrical contracting companies, which are members of IEC and want to achieve an excellent safety program, will be encouraged to participate. **IEC National and regional chapter offices will administer the program.** The contractor will be required to complete three phases of the program. At the completion of each step, OSHA will send a letter to the contracting company. The first letter will come from OSHA's Area Director; the second will be sent from OSHA's Regional Administrators and the assistant secretary of Labor for safety and Health , John Henshaw, will send the third.



Contracting companies successfully completing the program will be eligible for OSHA's prestigious VPP status (Voluntary Protection Program). At the present time, only companies having a safety rating which is 50% less than the national average for their industry may participate in VPP.

Application for the Occupational Safety and Health Administrator's "Challenge Program" to cover nonfixed and temporary job sites in the construction industry will be announced soon.

OSHA's VPP recognizes and includes partnerships with companies that have what are considered excellent safety and health. Generally the injury and illness rates of program members are 50 percent lower than comparable industries. Construction companies previously have been excluded from the VPP program because of a requirement to be on the job site for one year to be eligible for VPP. The "Challenge Program" will not have this requirement.

OSHA continues to look for ways to improve worker safety and reduce injuries and fatalities. Although fatalities and injury rates are decreasing in construction, an average of three people per day nationwide die at construction sites and approximately 1,300 are injured per day. The injury rate in construction is 40 percent higher than the general industry. John Henshaw believes this is not satisfactory.

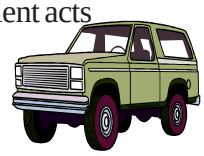
Off-the-Job Injuries

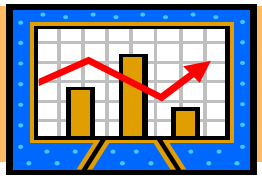
Almost 60% of corporate safety and health professionals believe that the costs from injuries that occur off the jobsites are equal to or greater than those occurring on the job. A few examples of off-the-job injuries include: motor vehicle safety issues, falls, burns, overexertion, sports injuries and burns.

Responses to a web-based survey issued by the National Safety Council indicate that more 80% of the 20.4 million disabling injuries, and more than 95% of the 99,500 unintentional deaths were due to unrelated work. And even though employers may pay the majority of costs associated with injuries (to include lost wages/productivity, insurance and medical bills), as few as 25% of the companies even track the occurrence of such injuries. Further, 45% of employers do not even offer information on off-the-job-injuries, though 40% of the companies will provide minimal health information, programs to help employees quit smoking, fitness training, stress management and weight management.

Please note the Costs Associated with these top 10 Workplace Injuries:

Injury	*Cost ($)*
Overexertion	12.5 billion
Falls on same level	5.7 billion
Bodily Reactions (bending, slipping without falling, tripping and climbing)	4.7 billion
Falls to lower levels	4.1 billion
Struck by object	3.9 billion
Highway incident	2.3 billion
Struck against object	1.9 billion
Caught in/ Compressed by	1.7 billion
Assaults and violent acts	0.4 billion





'Paying the Price'...Balancing Safety vs. Cost

Executives and senior operations or management staff are more concerned than ever about cutting costs and trimming expenses. Costs must be reduced not only to save their own organizations money, but in order to compete with other organizations who offer similar services. Though they often realize the importance of other factors, like safety issues, injury and illness rates, etc. It can be very difficult to balance the reality of costs and finance with the necessity for these other programs. Not only is this balancing act difficult, often times management staff does not advocate putting their employees in situations where loss of life or injury could occur. But in some unfortunate cases, upper-level management staff also feel that when it comes down to the wire between cutting costs vs. safety, safety concerns tend to take a backseat.

The reality is also that other individuals influence this delicate balancing act as well. Shareholders and business partners also make it their priority to know the financial status of the organizations in which they are involved. Jobs within the company are held by those individuals who can successfully run the business while simultaneously keeping costs at the minimum.

Effective safety procedures on the jobsite and in the workplace are a must, and should be a very high priority. In order to help high-level executives and management staff recognize the importance of safety, even in the face of cutting costs, it becomes necessary to evaluate safety programs in terms that they understand: *financial terms*.

If an operations or safety manager, or other knowledgable staff could create a report or an analysis on how safety programs SAVE money and CUT COSTS long-term, management is much more compelled to take notice. It can be shown how compensation, insurance and healthcare costs would be reduced significantly by having effective safety programs in place because increasing safety in the workplace reduces the need for the medical bills, compensation, loss productivity, etc.

Reducing these costs for medical bills and other injury-related compensation in turn increases the company's ability to complete in the marketplace.
By taking the initiative to provide this information, not only will they draw attention to the importance of the safety program in their organization, they will save their company money AND work in an organization that is markedly safer than its competitors. In addition, the initial cost analysis and future efforts to keep costs down will require a regular evaluation of the safety programs that are in place, which further benefits the company and all its employees.

OSHA's Inspection Fact Sheets....

OSHA recently issued two fact sheets which describe its role in investigating occupational deaths, as well as the OSHA inspection process. The inspection list details agency inspection priorities, explains phone and fax investigations, describes the step-by-step process of an on-site inspection, how results are handled, and tells how employers can appeal after OSHA issues citations and penalties. Please visit the following website for more information:
http://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data_General_Facts/factsheet-inspections.pdf
For more information on employer responsibilities and reporting, please visit: http://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data_General_Facts/factsheetdeath_on_the_job.pdf