

Falling objects, like tools, materials, or debris, can expose workers to minor injuries like cuts and abrasions, but can also cause more serious injuries like puncture wounds or concussions.

- In some cases, especially if workers are not wearing hard hats, a dropped object can result in hospitalization or even a fatal injury.

OSHA Standards very specifically state that workers must have protection from falling objects.

When workers are exposed to falling object hazards, they must wear head protection and at least one of the following safety measures must be implemented:

1. Erect toeboards, screens, or a guardrail system to prevent falling objects.
2. Erect a canopy structure to prevent falling objects.
3. Barricade the area below where objects could fall.

Use this safety topic as a starting point to spark a discussion on the falling object hazards at your work site. Review current safety measures in place and consider additional precautions that will “stop the drop” and prevent future falling object injuries.



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## FALLING OBJECTS PROTECTION

**OSHA Standard 1926.501(c)** *When an employee is exposed to falling objects, the employer shall have **each employee wear a hard hat** and shall implement one of the following measures:*



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**OSHA Standard 1926.501(c)(1)** *Erect toeboards, screens, or guardrail systems to prevent objects from falling from higher levels.*

**OSHA Standard 1926.501(c)(2)** *Erect a canopy structure and keep potential fall objects far enough from the edge of the higher level so that those objects would not go over the edge if they were accidentally displaced.*

**OSHA Standard 1926.501(c)(3)** *Barricade the area to which objects could fall, prohibit employees from entering the barricaded area, and keep objects that may fall far enough away from the edge of a higher level so that those objects would not go over the edge if they were accidentally displaced.*

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# FALL PROTECTION || Falling Objects

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*Unprotected walking/working surface. Fall protection and falling object protection is needed until flooring is installed. (Image: OSHA Training Institute, Southwest Education Center/eLCOSH.org)*



*Screen mesh can provide an additional layer of protection from dropped objects falling between guardrails. (Image: John Newquist/eLCOSH.org)*



## PREVENTABLE INCIDENTS

From OSHA Fatality and Catastrophe Investigation Summaries available online at [osha.gov](https://www.osha.gov)



*When a worker was standing at the base of a building, he was struck in the head by a drill that had fallen from scaffolding that was approximately 60 feet above the ground. Although the employee was wearing a hard hat, he sustained a serious head injury which required hospitalization and recovery time.*

- Use boards or guardrails on scaffolds to prevent objects from falling.



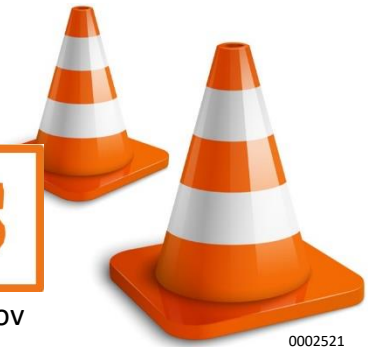
*One worker was on an aerial lift, another worker was on a ladder adjacent to the lift, and a third worker was on the ground providing support to the ladder. The worker on the ladder passed a sledgehammer to the worker in the lift, but the sledgehammer fell from the lift striking the worker on the ground. The blow to the head resulted in a laceration to the face, head trauma, and seizures.*

- Secure all tools and materials to prevent them from falling on people below.

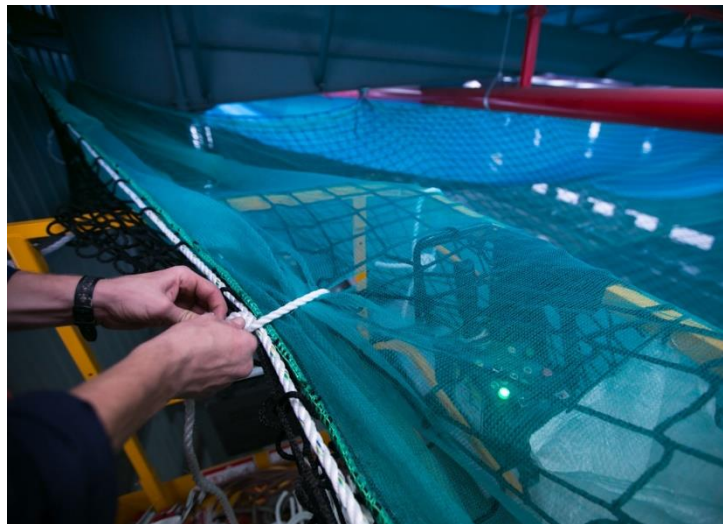


*When workers accidentally knocked a c-clamp over a toeboard and it fell 43 stories, the clamp struck another worker in the head, who was working at ground level. Even though he was wearing a hard hat, he was killed on impact.*

- Whenever possible, avoid working under other workers at heights.



Additional precautions that may help prevent falling object hazards at the work site:



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- Stack materials securely to prevent them from sliding, falling, or collapsing.
  - Unless items are being used for work in progress, keep all tools and materials at least 3 feet from any leading edges.
  - When working at heights do not keep any items in pockets that aren't zipped or securely closed, including items like cell phones, pens, or small tools.
  - Erect barricades and post warning signs at work zones that may have falling object hazards.
- Workers should always wear hard hats when work is being performed overhead, or there is any risk of falling objects in the area.
  - Ensure toeboards are in place; inspect frequently.
  - Do not hang or drape any items over guardrails.
  - Avoid working under moving loads.
  - Use debris nets or catch platforms for falling object protection.
  - Consider using tool lanyards to prevent tools from falling.



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- OSHA Accident Investigation Summary 1220716.015; [osha.gov/pls/imis/establishment.inspection\\_detail?id=1220716.015](http://osha.gov/pls/imis/establishment.inspection_detail?id=1220716.015)
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