



OSHA: The Slip and Fall Enforcers

Citations for fall-related violations top their 2018 list

Fall hazards are definitely on OSHA's radar these days, in a big way! During Fiscal Year 2018, two of the 10 most cited OSHA rule violations targeted worker fall protection. Number one on the list was Rule 1926.501 regarding general requirements to protect workers from falls (with a whopping 7,270 violations). Number eight was Rule 1926.503 concerning training requirements for fall protection (with 1,982 violations). That's a total of 9,252 fall-related violations in 2018ⁱ.

This is a strong wakeup call for businesses to identify their potential hazards and make corrections. It's not all that difficult, and prescribed safety measures have proven effective—trip and fall injuries are, in fact, largely preventable.

Part of OSHA regulation 1926.501 reads: The employer shall determine if the walking/working surfaces on which its employees are to work have the strength and structural integrity to support employees safely. Employees shall be allowed to work on those surfaces only when the surfaces have the requisite strength and structural integrityⁱⁱ.

Though protection from falling from roofs or ladders at construction sites makes up a large share of the hazard violations cited by OSHA, construction is by no means the only industry requiring that these safety protections be in place. From manufacturing plant to warehouse, from restaurant to hotel to high-rise office setting, all places of work pose potential dangers that, if not addressed as part

of a comprehensive safety plan, pose potential dangers to workers as well as OSHA violations subject to steep fines.

No matter what industry you're in, employers must provide working conditions that are free of known dangers, including trip and fall hazards, which are largely preventable. Many of the guidelines are steeped in common sense: One of the most important steps to take is to make sure the floors of your workplace are kept as clean and dry as possible—but this is not an easy task if you are in an industry like food service, food manufacturing or healthcare. Tried-and-true tips for mitigating hazards include keeping work areas free of clutter and tripping hazards; cleaning up spills as soon as they happen; dry mopping floors after a wet mop; using cleaners that don't leave floor surfaces slippery; and of course, using signage and barriers to warn workers of a wet, slippery or otherwise hazardous area.

Failing to provide workers with personal protective equipment is another potential OSHA violation. For many industries, that means protective workboots or slip-resistant safety footwear to help prevent trips and falls. Footwear with superior traction helps when workers are required to work in circumstances involving different or uneven levels or slopes, changes in floor surfaces such as carpet to tile, wet or slippery floors, and of course, climbing ladders. Implementing a trip-resistant footwear program at your place of business can help prevent recordable incidents and possible OSHA citations.

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Rule 1926.503 reads in part: The employer shall provide a training program for each employee who might be exposed to fall hazards. The program shall enable each employee to recognize the hazards of falling and shall train each employee in the procedures to be followed in order to minimize these hazardsⁱⁱⁱ.

Comprehensive training on the safe use of all machinery and equipment is an absolute essential according to OSHA rules and regulations, as is more overall safety coverage dealing with the specific risks of a particular work environment. Workers must be trained and made aware of the hazards of their job in the language they understand. Creating a culture of safety in the workplace includes rigorous standardized training including periodic refresher courses and continuing education. Thorough job and safety training goes a long way in preventing workplace injuries and OSHA violations.

Sources used for this article:

https://www.osha.gov/Top_Ten_Standards.html

<https://news.bloombergenvironment.com/safety/worker-falls-most-frequently-cited-on-the-job-danger-osha-says>

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/fallprotection/>

<https://www.lhsfna.org/index.cfm/lifelines/february-2019/osha-s-top-10-violations-of-2018-suggest-enforcement-isn-t-slowng-down/>

The 2018 report is a good reminder to all businesses of the vital importance of worker safety. And OSHA appears to be stepping up on enforcement. In FY2018, OSHA's top 10 violations resulted in 31,816 citations. That's an increase of 10% over the previous year, when the total was 28,774^{iv}. The violations referenced in the OSHA top 10 carry a maximum penalty of \$12,934 per employee affected^v. Obviously, it's a good idea find ways to get in compliance and boost the safety quotient in your workplace.



ⁱ <https://news.bloombergenvironment.com/safety/worker-falls-most-frequently-cited-on-the-job-danger-osha-says>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/fallprotection/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid

^{iv} <https://www.lhsfna.org/index.cfm/lifelines/february-2019/osha-s-top-10-violations-of-2018-suggest-enforcement-isn-t-slowng-down/>

^v Ibid

This information is for illustrative purposes only and is not meant to be a substitute for, or a legal interpretation of, occupational safety and health standards. Please refer to the appropriate state and federal codes of regulations for detailed and exact information, specifications, and exceptions.