



Gord Woodward

Gord Woodward has covered everything from ergonomics in truck cabs to safety motivation. In this edition, he talks fall protection (right), winter driving (page 15), and learns how to be a kid again through WorkSafeBC's new Science World exhibit (page 26).



Heather Allen

In our cover story, Penticton-based writer, editor, and newspaper columnist Heather Allen looks into the issues facing late-night retail on B.C.'s coast (page 7).



Lynn Easton

From asbestos removal to winter driving and rehabilitation innovations, writer Lynn Welburn has covered a variety of topics for *WorkSafe Magazine*. In this edition, she explores an innovative solution for preventing injuries when tarping a bulk load (page 11).



Don Hauka

From the suburban wilds of New Westminster, journalist, author, and screenwriter Don Hauka reaches out to manufacturing experts to talk safeguarding (page 23).

Fall protection can eliminate a leading cause of injury



Marcelle Hiebert
Occupational safety officer

Region: Port Moody
Years on the job: 1 year with WorkSafeBC, more than 10 years in construction safety

Have questions about fall protection? WorkSafeBC occupational safety officer Marcelle Hiebert is here to answer them. Hiebert formerly worked in construction highrises, from the Canada Line to the Port Mann Bridge, each of which had major elements of working at elevation.

Q. I've been in the roofing business for a long time and never had any problems. Why is fall protection such a big deal?

A. There's absolutely no reason anyone should fall from elevation, yet falls are one of the leading causes of injuries to construction workers in B.C. They represent 24 percent of all injuries and 37 percent of all claim costs. Falls from ladders, scaffolds, staging, and platforms injured or killed 1,408 workers in the construction sector from 2013 to 2015. That's more than one fall every day for three years.

It's more than physical injury too. For workers who have had a fall, there could also be psychological trauma. That's there forever.

Q. What does it mean to be "at elevation"?

A. At elevation means someone is working above ground level. When that's the case, the worker needs fall protection. Generally, the requirements start when a person is at 3 m (10 ft.) but they can also apply to heights of less than 3 m (10 ft.) if there's a risk of injury greater than what would happen if the person fell on a flat surface.

That's especially true if there's something hazardous below the worker. For example, if they're on scaffolding above a garbage bin, or on a stepladder above a short picket fence. In those cases, the worker needs fall protection.

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—Marcelle Hiebert, WorkSafeBC occupational safety officer

Q. What regulations should I review to learn about my fall-protection obligations?

A. Part 11 of the Regulation covers fall protection and the requirement for fall protection plans. Part 13 specifically covers ladders, scaffolds, and temporary work platforms. Be sure to read 4.54 and the ensuing sections for information on guardrails.

Q. What is the hierarchy for fall protection?

A. It refers to the required methods to eliminate or control fall hazards. They are, in order: guardrails, fall restraint, fall arrest, and safety procedures.

You can’t jump the hierarchy. You have to start with guardrails. If that’s not practical due to things like sheeting or lack of space, then you have to go to fall restraint — a fixed-length line that prevents workers from travelling too close to an opening or edge. If that’s not possible, then you need a fall-arrest system. This includes a lanyard or lifeline, a harness, and an anchor. It protects you after a fall by stopping you from hitting the surface below.

Q. What are some of the most common problems surrounding fall protection?

A. A big one is complacency. People get so used to walking on sloped surfaces that they forget to pay attention to requirements for their own safety. A lot of times we find workers in direct view of their supervisors and nobody is tied off.

Interestingly, the public is very knowledgeable about safety. They call us to tell us about roofers working in their neighbourhood without any harnesses.

The first thing I look for is whether workers are even wearing fall protection equipment and, if so,

are they connected to anything. A lot of people wear their harnesses and don’t connect the lifeline because it’s an inconvenience to drag the rope and keep it tight. If you keep all your connections tight at all times and you trip on a roof, that’s where you’ll stay — on the roof.

Q. I’m a worker; what does my employer have to do to protect me?

A. Your employer is responsible for:

- Following the fall protection hierarchy
- Providing, maintaining, testing, and repairing your safety equipment
- Training and supervising you in the use of that equipment, including making sure everyone is tied off and has their own anchor

If these requirements haven’t been followed, you need to exercise your right to refuse unsafe work. In the roofing industry, that right is not used enough by workers.

Q. Where can I find more information on fall protection?

A. At worksafebc.com you’ll find booklets, videos, and toolbox meeting guides. You can also contact the BC Construction Safety Alliance (bccsa.ca) for training and help with developing fall protection plans.

Looking for answers to your specific health and safety questions? Send them to us at worksafemagazine@worksafebc.com, and we’ll consider them for our next Ask an Officer feature. ☺

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