



Fall protection use and Saskatchewan construction workers



We did a
survey
and here's
what we found

In spring 2019, we conducted focus groups and industry interviews with supervisors, workers and stakeholders about fall protection in the workplace. We wanted to understand **what prevents people from using fall protection** on construction sites, specifically in the residential construction industry.



How many workplace injuries are due to falls from heights?

23%

of serious injuries are because of falls (in all industries)

14%

of all injury claims are because of falls (in all industries)

5%

of all serious injury claims are in residential construction

3%

of residential construction injury claims are serious in nature

Why aren't workers wearing fall protection?



Perception of risk

- Experienced workers believe they are capable and comfortable enough working from heights that they don't need fall protection. They also believe fall protection is cumbersome, uncomfortable and unnecessary if they're working carefully.



Time pressure

- There is a perception that planning, installing and using prevention measures slows workers down, which means extra costs for the company and the homeowner.
- Some workers feel it takes too much time to put safety measures in place and movement-limiting systems are too constrictive.
- Cost conscious homeowners are pressuring companies to be extremely competitive with their quotes. It costs money and time to buy new safety equipment, set up control zones and install/maintain fall protection measures.
- The residential construction season is compressed, so contractors are under pressure to finish jobs quickly. Companies may juggle workers and resources between multiple job sites.



Small tasks

- Workers will complete small, quick or seemingly safe tasks without safety precautions, such as working from lower heights.
- Inexperienced supervisors and workers are not consistently assessing all situations for hazards.



Unaware of legal responsibilities

- Most residential construction companies and homeowners are not aware of their legal responsibilities or legal liability if a worker falls from heights while working on their home.



What situations make it difficult to wear fall protection?

Confined spaces such as around and between trusses

Narrow spaces between houses where there is no room for a basket or scaffolding

Long, steep climbs to tie-off anchors

Tangled lines when multiple workers are together on the same roof and tying off to unanchored trusses

Homes built close together prevent companies from building protective slopes when digging basement foundations



Who enforces fall protection?

Safety rules are not enforced, especially in rural Saskatchewan. Rural areas use significantly less fall protection than urban areas.

It is believed that **rural companies receive less attention and oversight** than urban companies.

Visits from Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) increase compliance, but OHS can't be visible at all small construction sites all the time.



When are workers wearing fall protection?

Most companies and workers **routinely have fall prevention measures in place.**

Fall protection measures are regularly used at residential sites **when work is at a significant height or on steeply sloped roofs.**

\$ Some residential construction companies look at longer term costs of injuries and **see the benefits of avoiding time loss workplace injuries** to pay lower WCB insurance premiums.

Younger workers are more accepting of fall protection measures than veteran builders.



Who is responsible for fall protection?

Residential construction company **owners and developers, foremen and site supervisors are responsible.**

Rural supervisors are less likely to feel responsible for fall protection.



Most workers suggest fall protection measures **are a shared responsibility.**

Read the complete fall protection research report on WorkSafe Saskatchewan's website.

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