



Wingfield: The definition of "prompt rescue" depends on the situation.

what's appropriate for the particular circumstance," Wingfield said. "I think there's a certain vagueness [in the definition of 'prompt rescue'] for a reason, because every scenario is different. There are so many variables to consider: Is the person conscious or unconscious? What's the body-holding device? Is the person suspended or is his body being supported by something in addition to the harness? It's up to employers, who have the responsibility of caring for the worker at heights, to identify the hazards and respond to them accordingly."

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT ONE

If the responsibility lies with the employer to have a post-fall rescue system in place, what are the critical components of rescuing a suspended worker?

As obvious as it sounds, experts agree that the most important aspect of effective post-fall rescue is this: Have a plan.

The lack of *any* form of a pre-conceived post-fall rescue plan not only puts the fall victim at risk but also puts rescuers in harm's way.

"Whenever you have unplanned attempts to rescue, second or third injuries or fatalities are not uncommon," Satti noted.

Whether the plan calls for self-rescue, buddy rescue, a team approach or a dedicated in-house rescue team, Wingfield stresses that simply having a written post-fall rescue plan takes some of the stress and chaos out of an already stressful situation, increasing the chances of a successful rescue.

Rescue plans, Wingfield adds, don't have to be complex.

"It might be as simple as figuring out,

'Where's the articulated lift?' Or 'Where's the ladder?'" Wingfield said.

The revised Z359.1 fall protection standard will offer more specific guidance on designing a post-fall rescue plan, among other aspects of creating a comprehensive fall protection program.

"I'm pretty confident it is the best standard in the world right now on how to create and maintain a fall protection program in general industry," said Wright, a Z359.1 committee member.

A fall protection standard being developed for construction – ANSI A10 – will address rescue procedures for construction sites, according to Michael McCann, safety director for the Center to Protect Workers' Rights, the research and training arm of the AFL-CIO's Building and Construction Trades Department. McCann is a member of the ANSI A10 committee.

As a starting point, though, OSHA's 2004 bulletin encourages employers to implement a rescue plan that includes procedures for:

- ☛ Preventing prolonged suspension;
- ☛ Identifying orthostatic intolerance signs and symptoms; and
- ☛ Performing rescue and treatment as quickly as possible.

The agency cautions that "some authorities advise against moving the rescued worker to a horizontal position too quickly," which "is likely to cause a large volume of de-oxygenated blood to move to the heart, if the worker has been suspended for an extended period." This can lead to cardiac arrest.

In a rescue situation, OSHA recommends continuous monitoring of the suspended worker for signs and symptoms of orthostatic intolerance and suspension trauma. The possible signs and symptoms of orthostatic intolerance include faintness, nausea, breathlessness, dizziness, sweating, unusually low heart rate or unusually low blood pressure, paleness, hot flashes, "graying" or loss of vision or increased heart rate.

If rescue can't be performed in a prompt manner, and self-rescue isn't an option, Dunn recommends having suspended workers keep their legs moving to "keep the blood pumping," reducing the risk of venous pooling.

"That can help lengthen the time he has to hang there until rescue shows up," Dunn said.

Wingfield notes that more and more fall arrest equipment is being designed to

KENTUCKY, UTAH: IT IS 'FEASIBLE' TO PROVIDE FALL PROTECTION IN RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION

On the surface, Kentucky and Utah have about as much in common as horse racing and downhill skiing.

But when it comes to workplace health and safety, both states have quite a bit in common. For one thing, both states' top workplace safety administrators are concerned that there have been too many fatal falls in their respective construction industries in recent years.

And those same administrators share the view that OSHA's current enforcement policy for fall protection in residential construction – STD 3-0.1A – lacks the teeth to reverse those trends.

Consequently, Kentucky and Utah – both of which have OSHA state programs – no longer follow the federal guidelines.

In Utah, where falls "far and away" are the biggest cause of fatalities in the construction industry, it made sense to back away from the federal guidelines, which "seem to ease off fall protection for people working on residential construction projects," explained Larry Patrick, administrator for Utah Occupational Safety and Health (UOSH).

"People wonder why we're the only states that have done this, and I wonder why the other states haven't," Patrick said.

As of this past January, the fall protection guidelines for construction set forth in 29 CFR 1926 Subpart M are the law of the land in Utah.

In Kentucky, where there were 61 construction falls reported from 1999 through 2004 – two of those resulting in fatalities in 2004 – the Kentucky Occupational Safety and Health Program (KY OSH) similarly was "uncomfortable with the provisions" of the federal fall protection guidelines, according to KY OSH Safety Standards Specialist Chuck Stribling.

On Feb. 16, 2005, KY OSH issued its own instruction for fall protection in residential construction, which explains that residential construction firms must provide fall protection measures either in accordance with 29 CFR 1926 Subpart M or with state guidelines detailed in the Kentucky instruction.

"Back in 1994, when the interim guidelines came out, feasibility was the issue," said Steve Morrison, executive director of KY OSH. "Here it is, 2005, and there are methods, products and procedures that have been developed to facilitate compliance. The program believes it's feasible now to provide fall protection to employees during residential construction."

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