Height Hazard: Fall Protection Beyond the Roof Stats and Facts



FACTS

1. **Elevated Surface Edges:** Workers face severe fall risk on mezzanines, platforms, scaffolds, lift baskets, and loading docks—not just rooftops.
2. **Unprotected Openings:** Floor holes, skylights, wall openings, and unguarded shafts can cause sudden, unexpected falls through surfaces that appear stable.
3. **Improper Ladder Transitions:** Moving from a ladder onto a platform or structure creates instability and increases the chance of missteps and slips.
4. **Fragile Surfaces:** Old decking, corroded metal, or weakened wood can collapse under a worker’s weight, causing falls from height without warning.
5. **Improper Anchor Points:** Using makeshift or uncertified tie-off points leads to equipment failure, swing hazards, or total arrest-system collapse.
6. **Scaffold Misconfiguration:** Missing guardrails, uneven footings, or overloaded planks create multiple fall hazards during setup and use.

STATS

- In 2023, falls caused 421 of 1,075 US construction fatalities, accounting for 39% of all deaths, with many occurring beyond roofs on scaffolds, ladders, and elevated platforms.
- From 2020-2024, Canadian construction falls led to over 5,400 claims in British Columbia alone, including 1,900 serious injuries and 35 deaths from unprotected heights like scaffolds and maintenance platforms.
- In 2025, OSHA issued 5,914 fall protection violations in US construction, the top-cited standard for 15 years, often for inadequate systems on non-roof elevated work surfaces.
- US construction workers face falls at a rate 3x higher than other industries; from 2020-2023, 46.1% of all fatal falls occurred in construction beyond roofs, like from scaffolds or ladders.
- In Canada, falls caused 140,663 lost-time injuries nationwide from 2020-2022 (16% of all claims), with construction and maintenance sectors seeing high rates from unprotected edges and platforms.
- Over 40,000 Canadian workers suffer fall injuries annually (2020-2025 average), with 18% of workplace deaths from falls beyond roofs in high-risk tasks like window washing or equipment maintenance.