



GETTING HIGH ON SAFETY

Constructing new buildings, especially high rises, can be hazardous work not only for those who work on the structure but also for anyone on or around the work site. Before construction begins, a competent person should conduct a hazard assessment of the project, noting where injuries or accidents could possibly occur. Then a plan should be developed to eliminate or safeguard against those hazards. All project workers should be informed of the hazards and be trained in safety practices and procedures to follow so that the project can be completed without an injury incident.

As falls are the number one cause of construction fatalities, the fall prevention program and fall arrest devices are a must for training and discussion. They should be explained and fully understood by all workers. Training should include demonstrations of how to wear, use or set up fall arrest equipment as well as how to recognize and when to remove any damaged or defective fall protection devices.

The proper wear and care for personal protection equipment should also be covered in pre-project training. Because work may be done on multiple floors simultaneously where tools or equipment may be moved from one level to another, hard hats are crucial protection devices for workers or visitors on a construction project. Other protection equipment for eyes or hearing, hands or feet should also be covered. An analysis should be conducted to determine if there are any lead containing materials to be worked on. If so, respiratory protection may be necessary as lead could be freed up by sandblasting, scaling or paint removal.

The weather can be a serious concern when working at heights, as workers are more exposed to the elements. So workers should dress appropriately to stay warm or cool as necessary. Dressing too warm on a hot day can cause dehydration. If it's raining or other liquids get on the walking surface, workers can slip and fall so foot traction is important. If the wind or general temperature is cold, workers may have difficulty gripping tools or safety equipment. They tend move slower when they're cold and are more likely to have strain or sprain injuries. If it's windy and workers are carrying materials, their bodies can catch the wind and knock them off of the structure, so maintaining balance on high is important.

Other hazards to be considered are those associated with welding. Welding creates metal fumes, high levels of heat, hazardous levels of light (including ultraviolet and infrared), and high voltages. Compressed

gases and their storage cylinders may also create hazards. There are additional hazards created by cranes as they are used to transport building materials. Moving heavy loads overhead creates a danger to anyone working beneath the load. Workers and visitors need to be aware of the activities taking place above, below and all around them on the construction site.

Although there are many hazardous situations that are common to most construction work sites, there are also hazards particular to a specific project or work site. It's important that safety plans and training programs address the potential hazards specific to project and its site. Safety must be a high priority, especially for construction work done at heights.