



SHOW TOPIC MENU



SAFETY TOPICS

Make Fall Safety a Top Priority

It may come as a surprise that the third leading cause of unintentional injury-related death is falls. In 2016, 34,673 people died in falls at home and at work, according to [Injury Facts®](#), and for working adults, depending on the industry, falls can be the leading cause of death.

Hazards in the Workplace

In 2016, 697 workers died in falls to a lower level, and 48,060 were [injured badly enough](#) to require days off of work. A worker doesn't have to fall from a high level to suffer fatal injuries; 134 workers were killed in falls on the same level in 2016, according to *Injury Facts*. [Construction workers](#) are most at risk for fatal falls from height – more than seven times the rate of other industries – but falls can happen anywhere, even at a "desk job."

[NSC data for 2016](#) includes falls from height and falls on the same level, by industry:

- Construction: 24,700 injuries, 384 deaths
- Manufacturing: 22,040 injuries, 49 deaths
- Wholesale trade: 10,250 injuries, 21 deaths
- Retail trade: 29,830 injuries, 29 deaths
- Transportation and Warehousing: 23,490 injuries, 46 deaths
- Professional and business services: 22,090 injuries, 111 deaths
- Education and health services: 43,660 injuries, 18 deaths
- Government: 63,350 injuries, 44 deaths



Whether working from a ladder, roof or scaffolding, it's important to plan ahead, assess the risk and use the right equipment. First, determine if working from a height is absolutely necessary or if there is another way to do the task safely.

- Discuss the task with coworkers and determine what safety equipment is needed
- Make sure you are properly trained on how to use the equipment
- Scan the work area for potential hazards before starting the job
- Make sure you have level ground to set up the equipment
- If working outside, check the weather forecast; never work in inclement weather
- Use the correct tool for the job, and use it as intended
- Ensure stepladders have a locking device to hold the front and back open
- Always keep two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand on the ladder
- Place the ladder on a solid surface and never lean it against an unstable surface
- A straight or extension ladder should be 1 foot away from the surface it rests on for every 4 feet of height and extend at least 3 feet over the top edge
- Securely fasten straight and extension ladders to an upper support
- Wear slip-resistant shoes and don't stand higher than the third rung from the top
- Don't lean or reach while on a ladder, and have someone support the bottom
- Never use old or damaged equipment; check thoroughly before use

Fall Hazards at Home

Are you a weekend warrior or do-it-yourselfer? If you take on home improvement or other weekend projects, it's important to prepare yourself for physical exertion, especially if you've been sedentary through the winter months, and take extra precautions to prevent falls.

Risky projects, like installing siding, gutters or roofs, are best left to professionals. Saving money isn't worth risking a debilitating or fatal fall.

At home or at work, many of the same rules apply. When taking on a project:

- Practice all of the ladder safety tips mentioned above; [find more ladder safety information here](#)
- Keep the work area clear of hazards and immediately clean up spills
- Read all instructions and safety precautions on your equipment
- Don't wear loose clothing that can get caught in equipment

We tend to think we're always safe on flat ground, but the thousands of injuries each year tell us otherwise.

- Falls are the #1 cause of death for older adults; [fall-proof your home](#) if residents are older than 65



- Keep file cabinets and desk drawers closed
- Keep electrical and phone cords out of traffic areas
- Install handrails on stairways
- Wear sensible footwear
- Never stand on chairs, tables or any surface with wheels
- Properly arrange furniture to create open pathways
- Maintain good lighting indoors and out

About [9.2 million people](#) were treated in emergency rooms for fall-related injuries in 2016. A fall can end in death or disability in a split second, but with a few simple precautions, you'll be sure stay safe at home and at work.

NEXT

NSC Stands with OSHA on Fall Safety

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