



Sawmills and Fall Protection

HS97-117D (1-08)

A 5-Minute Safety Training Aid

Falls are common and can be costly.

Falls in sawmills are all too common. Stumbling over debris, slipping on sawdust, falling from a ladder or jumping off of a truck can result in serious injury.

Clear passages, safe ladders

Maintaining a clean work area can prevent many falls. Routine cleanup of scraps can prevent tripping. If visibility is reduced as a result of dust in the air, dust collection equipment should be installed. It's also wise to ensure that frequently traveled paths are located away from machinery. Choosing the right ladder for the job is also important. Workers on stepladders should be able to work comfortably without having to reach above their heads, lean out to the sides or stand on a level above the highest safe-rated step. Federal regulations require that portable ladders extend at least three feet beyond the upper landing and that fixed ladders extend at least three and one-half feet beyond the landing. Other ways to prevent falls include building passages for workers to cross over conveyors. Federal regulations require top- and midlevel guardrails to be used even with low-level elevated catwalks, operator stations and access platforms.

Tips to reduce the likelihood of falls

- Keep passageways and workstations free of dust, debris, oil, grease and water.
- Provide sufficient containers for refuse.
- Provide cleaning stations for protective eyewear so employees can see potential fall hazards while wearing such protection.
- Passageways and work areas should be well lit.
- Locate frequently traveled paths away from machinery.
- Use stepladders that permit workers to work comfortably without having to reach up or lean out.
- Use portable ladders that extend at least three feet beyond the upper landing and fixed ladders that reach three and one-half feet, as required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards.

- Inspect and maintain the non-slip safety feet of portable ladders.
- Install non-slip coatings on stairs and in areas prone to slipping hazards.
- Build catwalks, stiles or other safe passages for workers to cross over conveyors.
- Build top and mid-level guardrails on catwalks, elevated operator stations and access platforms. Make them conform to OSHA standards.
- Never climb on logs or a log deck, especially when the deck is wet.

