

### Methods to Incorporate Fall Protection into a Job Site

#### ***What steps can employers take to incorporate fall protection into a job site as the work is being designed?***

We are seeing more employers taking a pro-active approach to addressing fall hazard situations than they did 10 years ago. With some of our major clients, there are certainly some common components of a pro-active approach to fall protection.

An important step is to:

1. Commit to a Cross-Functional Approach to Safety – which means to include members from the Safety & Health, Facilities and Engineering teams to collaborate early on new equipment installation plans, as well as, on-going maintenance needs. While this seems like a standard approach in any new equipment installation project, it is too often overlooked during the initial planning stages. We have found that successful employers engage members from these teams early in the project, such as during the design phase, to discuss maintenance and safety requirements and their impact to the project.

For example, a common situation is the interstitial crawlspaces above ceiling areas where various equipment has been added over the years, such as air-handling units, process piping and computer lines. In some cases, after process lines have been added, workers find that they no longer have direct access to maintain an existing AC unit, in a safe way.

When cross-functional teams are in place, maintenance and safety considerations are discussed early in the planning stages, options are evaluated such as placement of and accessibility to the equipment and a safer work environment results.

Another important consideration is to:

2. Partner with the Equipment Manufacturers to incorporate design modifications which will “engineer out” a potential fall hazard, such as design the equipment with gauges/valves located closer to ground level - therefore eliminating the need for personnel to work at heights and reduce significant costs from retro-fitting alternative solutions.



## DID YOU KNOW?

### *Fall Hazard Risk Consultants*

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It is not uncommon for some of our clients to routinely work closely with equipment manufacturers on design modifications, which provide significant safety benefits and cost savings.

Unfortunately, when these steps are not implemented, there is a significant impact to a company's processes, resource man-hours often resulting in time-consuming remediation steps. For example, a common situation we see, especially in manufacturing facilities, is when individuals need to access the top of various process equipment or tanks, to access valves, which could be 10-20 ft. above ground level. Frequently, the workers access the units via a portable ladder and then climb on top of the unit to perform the maintenance work – all without being safely protected from a fall hazard.

When maintenance and safety considerations are discussed with the equipment manufacturers, early in the planning stages, modifications can be more easily incorporated into the equipment's design minimizing potential fall exposures.

### ***What stakeholders should be included in this process?***

Certainly members from the company's Safety & Health, Facilities and Engineering teams must be included in this process but it is also essential that management demonstrates their commitment by implementing a cross-functional team approach to new equipment installations as well as on-going safety & maintenance issues.

Our clients who have partnered with the OSHA Voluntary Protection Programs (VPP) have found implementing this type of approach helps them to achieve a successful and safe environment. Management leadership and employee involvement are key elements in ensuring a safe and healthy working environment.