



Announcer:

It is time for the *IHSA Safety Podcast*.

Enzo Garritano:

Welcome to *IHSA Safety Podcast*. I'm Enzo Garritano. We continue our series about fall protection in construction. This series of podcasts features Brian Barron, Senior Manager of the Construction Health and Safety Program with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. Let's continue the conversation with Brian. Here's your host, Michelle Roberts.

Michelle Roberts:

Joining us again is Brian Barron. In this episode, we're going to be talking about workplace parties' roles and responsibilities regarding fall prevention.

So Brian, we know that employers are required to provide supervision, information, and instruction to all workers on how to protect health and safety in the workplace. This includes information about safe work policies, measures, and procedures specific to the workplace, and includes the duties of the workers and how they'll perform their tasks. Can you give us examples of workplace party duties that are listed in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and/or the Construction Projects regulation (O. Reg. 213/91), and specifically about the different roles? So let's start with the employer, what are some of their responsibilities?

Brian Barron:

Yeah, absolutely. Employers are required to acquaint workers with all hazards on a project, as well as inform and train them on how to either avoid the hazard or protect themselves from it. Let's say a fall hazard is present. The employer would inform the workers that the fall hazard is present, then would walk them through the steps on how to either work to remove the hazard with, say, guardrails, or how to work safely around it, so having fall protection.

In the example of a framing job, where the second floor is on the building, but not having walls been erected or anything like that, the employer would have a competent worker install an anchor point as per the manufacturer's instructions. Then they would don an appropriate personal fall protection system. Then they would install a guardrail system around the perimeter of the floor and any floor openings. At that point, the floor would be safe and the other workers could actually access that work area.

Now, in addition to this, the employer also has the duty to take every reasonable caution in the circumstances to protect workers, so they would have to do anything that was reasonable to ensure that the workers were really aware of the hazard and that they had any of the safety equipment that was required to protect them from that hazard. They would have to ensure that the equipment, materials and protective devices as prescribed are provided, used and maintained in good condition. of fall protection,

So with the example of fall protection, ensuring that the appropriate fall protection equipment is available, so harnesses, lanyards, rope grabs, lifelines and anchor points, and making sure that they're in good shape and of the correct standard. And then, provide workers with competent supervision, information, instruction and personal protective equipment when required.

Now, this instruction and supervision also includes how to select the appropriate equipment for the task. So for an example, so maybe a step stool, a ladder, or possibly even a scaffold to access different areas, as well as how to perform the task safely, like how to use a ladder, so proper selection of the ladder, how to handle materials while on the ladder, how to climb up and down the ladder, so maintaining things like 3-point contact and that sort of thing.

Michelle Roberts:

Okay. So you mentioned there that's the employer's responsibilities, and a word that stands out I think is the supervision piece, so let's talk about the key player there, the supervisor's roles.

Brian Barron:

Yeah. So supervisors are really an extension of the employer, and as such, they share really many of the same responsibilities. Another way to think about it is that they're the employer's representative on the project. Anything the employer requires or policies that they've developed, it's the supervisor's role to carry them out or ensure that the workers are following them on the project. In the example I gave around ensuring guardrails are installed around the second floor of a framing project, it would be the supervisor's responsibility to develop the hazard assessment or job plan and acquaint the workers with it to ensure that they work safely around the fall hazard. It would also be the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the workers are using or wearing any personal fall protection equipment that the employer requires them to wear, but they must also ensure that every reasonable caution is taken in the circumstances to protect the workers.

So when supervisors understand what hazards their workers are exposed to, they can influence the way workers perform the tasks, they can ensure that the workers are performing the tasks in a safe manner, they make decisions that protect the workers' safety, and they take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances. Another example of this is when workers are using ladders. So the supervisor would be required to make sure that workers were maintaining three-point contact when climbing up and down the ladder, keeping their belt buckle between the side rails of the ladder, so really meaning that they're not overreaching from one side of the ladder to the other, they're working within the appropriate work area for the ladder and not creating an unstable situation, and then workers are also readily able to achieve 3-point contact when working from certain types of ladders.

Michelle Roberts:

Well, thanks for expanding on some of those supervisor responsibilities. I know one thing that IHSA likes to emphasize too is the importance of supervisors and leading by example and the fact that they have a big influence on the rest of the workplace parties, and it's very important that supervisors actually walk the walk and talk the talk and certainly prioritize safety over productivity. Supervisors generally become mentors to new and young workers, and so it's really important that they install safe practices and procedures and certainly enforce those on the job site.

Another thing for the supervisors is to encourage participation and get workers to speak up and share their concerns and their experiences and participate also in communicating those hazards. Daily safety talks, you mentioned, is a great way to be able to inform people of the hazard, like, "Hey, there's a hazard here today. Let's use a safety talk. Let's be able to identify some controls." And making sure that they're constantly reinforcing that working at heights is risky, so we need to take proper prevention measures, so thanks for that. Now, let's touch a little bit on the next workplace parties' roles, and that's reminding everyone listening on what are some of the workers' requirements when it comes to working safe in fall protection?

Brian Barron:

Yeah. So workers have similar responsibilities to employers and supervisors. Now, they're a little bit different in that they really just have themselves to worry about, to a large extent, but also potentially pointing out other issues around the site. But ultimately, they have the duty at a minimum to work in compliance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and the regulations. But they also have to follow the employer's policies, so they've got to use or wear the protective devices that the employer requires, and again, at minimum, from the act or the regulations, and examples of that would be fall protection equipment. They also have the duty to report to the employer the absence or defect in any equipment or protective device or any other hazards or unsafe conditions on the project.

Now, in addition to that, there's three main rights for workers as well, and it's really the right to know, so they've got the right to be educated and have information, instruction, and supervision. They've got the right to participate in the solution of health and safety issues. And most importantly, they have the right to refuse unsafe work, and what that means is where they don't feel safe or they don't feel they've been provided the right training or equipment to perform a task, they have the right to refuse that work.

Michelle Roberts:

Thanks, Brian. And I think that a highlight of all three of those roles certainly emphasizes the key principle of the internal responsibility system, and in effective workplaces, it takes all workers, supervisors, constructors, employers, to play their roles to keep everyone safe. So thanks for sharing that, Brian.

Enzo Garritano:

Thanks for listening to this episode. In support of preventing falls from heights on construction projects, we recommend you take action, deliver a safety talk, have a meaningful conversation with your workers about the hazards relating to working at heights, but most importantly, about safety tips, practices and expectations to ensure they get home safe to their loved ones each and every day. For more on this topic, visit ihsasafetypodcast.ca for your link to fall prevention tools and resources. I'm Enzo Garritano, and thanks again to our host, Michelle Roberts, and special guest, Brian Barron, Senior Manager with the Construction Health and Safety Program of the Ministry of Labour, Training, and Skills Development. Thanks for listening.

Announcer

The *IHSA Safety Podcast*. For more episodes, tips and all things safety, go to ihsasafetypodcast.ca.
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