

Note: Information provided in this lesson only covers the United States and may not apply to any productions that are taking place in other countries. If you have questions regarding fall protection requirements for a country in which productions will be taking place, please speak with your supervisor or designated supervisor.

INTRODUCTION

Working in the entertainment industry is as thrilling as it is demanding. From stagehands to performers, from rigging to camera operations, everyone involved is essential in creating the magic that captivates audiences. However, the heights at which you may be asked to work can pose a severe risk of falls, leading to catastrophic injuries or worse. Therefore, it's crucial to understand and implement effective fall protection measures. In this lesson, we will cover the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements for fall protection, where falls can occur in the entertainment industry, the personal protective equipment that you may be asked or required to wear, and the safe work practices associated with falls within the entertainment industry.



OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (OSHA)

Federal OSHA

In the United States, the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has set requirements for which fall protection should be used depending on the activities being performed.

Where crew members are performing construction activities, for instance, the building of sets, fall protection in states that fall under Federal OSHA regulations should be worn when working at heights that are at or exceed six feet.

Where cast and crew are exposed to fall and falling object hazards that are at or above four feet, some sort of fall protection should be utilized. Fall protection can include a variety of things, including:

- Personal fall restraint systems
- Personal fall arrest systems
- Guardrails
- Safety netting

Please note that there are some exceptions to fall protection when employees are exposed to falls or falling objects under the general industry standard, which include:

- *Portable ladders*
- *Fall hazards presented by the exposed perimeters of entertainment stags and exposed perimeters of rail-station platforms*
- *Powered platforms that are used for building maintenance*
- *Aerial lifts that are covered under the vehicle-mounted elevating and rotating work platform standards*

Cal/OSHA

However, when working in the state of California, the state OSHA plan sets the fall protection requirement for construction activities at seven and a half feet. So, departments that are performing construction activities that are at or above this height should use the appropriate type of fall protection for their task. Depending on the task, where traditional fall protection methods may not be feasible, your production may create and implement a fall protection plan. This plan should be reviewed prior to the start of construction activities.

Please note that California follows the four feet rule for any general industry activities.

If you have any questions regarding any OSHA requirements for the use of fall protection for your production, please speak with your supervisor or designated contact.

WHERE FALLS CAN OCCUR IN THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

Whether it is for a film, television, theater, or a live event, there are many ways in which cast and crew can fall. These include, but may not be limited to:

- Uneven surfaces, such as stage setups, scaffolding, outdoor terrain, etc.
- Setting up overhead rigging, such as lights, curtains, or other equipment
- Working from elevated platforms, such as camera pods, cherry pickers, boom lifts, etc.
- Performing stunts that require wire work or when performing stunts at low or high heights
- Building temporary structures, such as sets, breakaway stunt structures, and so on
- Setting up or working with props or scenery, such as unstable or moveable objects that can cause you to become unbalanced

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE/FALL PROTECTION EQUIPMENT

To help minimize the chance of cast and crew getting hurt by a fall, production companies will often utilize different types of personal protective and fall equipment. PPE and fall protection may include, but not limited to:

- Crash mats
- Inflatable bags (airbags or air mattresses)
- Padding
- Stunt harness
- Fall resistant system
- Five point fall harness
- Fly harnesses
- Stage harnesses
- Hanging harness
- Guardrails/barricades
- Safety netting
- Helmets



All personal protective and fall protection equipment should be inspected for signs of wear, damage, or modification before it is put on or utilized. Equipment that has been modified or damaged should be reported to the appropriate supervisor or designated contact.

Modified or damaged equipment should not be used during the production, as using the equipment could result in injuries or death.



ENTERTAINMENT: FALL PROTECTION

SAFE WORK PRACTICES

Pre-Planning for Selecting Personal Protective and Fall Protection Equipment for the Production

The type of personal protective and fall protection equipment that will be used during the production will typically be decided upon after designated personnel have conducted a job hazard analysis or other assessment of the fall hazards that may be present during the production. This will normally start at the pre-planning stages of the production but may also occur as the production progresses.

If you have questions about why specific equipment is being provided, please speak with your supervisor or designated contact.

Safety Briefings and Rehearsals

To make sure that you are comfortable with all of the protection equipment, you should attend all safety meetings for your job task. Safety briefings should also include information on how a rescue will be performed in the event of a fall actually occurring. Depending on the situation, self-rescue may be an option. If you have questions regarding the rescue plan, please speak with the appropriate personnel.

In addition to these meetings, stunt personnel and actors should also attend all rehearsals to make sure that they are comfortable with the actions that they will be asked to perform, as well as to assure that they are comfortable with the equipment. If a harness or other item of personal protective equipment is not fitting properly during rehearsal, please notify your supervisor or designated contact.

Working at Low Heights

If you will be working at low heights, such as when working from ladders, trailers, stages, or elevated sets, you should do the following:

- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Maintain three points of contact when ascending and descending ladders, stairs, vehicles, trailers, and/or ramps.
- Clean up any spilled liquids or other debris in accordance with the production's policies and procedures.

Utilizing Protective Equipment

When you are working at heights and are required to wear fall protection, you should do the following:

- Inspect the harness and lanyards in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and the production's policies and procedures.
 - Harnesses and/or lanyards that do not pass inspection should be reported to the appropriate personnel and not used.
- Make sure that the harness is fitting comfortably but is still tight enough to keep you in it should a fall occur.
 - If a harness is not fitting properly, you should inform the appropriate personnel and try another harness. Wearing an ill-fitting harness could either cause you to fall out or increase your chances of an injury occurring should you fall.
- Use all provided anchorage points to secure your harness.
 - Anchorage points may be provided by a manufacturer (for example, on aerial lifts) or may be installed by the production company.





ENTERTAINMENT: FALL PROTECTION

Where guardrails, barricades, or safety netting will be used, crew members should make sure that they have been installed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, and where applicable, the production's policies and procedures.

Stunt Work

Where stunt personnel or actors will be performing actions at heights, fall protection equipment should be set up in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Additionally, falls should be performed as choreographed by the choreographer and during rehearsals. If you feel that something is going wrong with a stunt, please notify the director and choreographer.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the entertainment industry is unique and yet similar when it comes to the type of fall hazards that may be present in the workplace. However, cast and crew may be required to utilize a variety of personal protective and fall protection equipment in order to minimize the chances of a fall occurring. If you have questions regarding fall protection for your production, please speak with your supervisor or designated contact.

