



Working Over Water

We don't often think about the hazards involved with working over water because most of us don't work over water all that often. Some situations where you would find these conditions include working on dams, jetties, bridges, docks, sea walls, and sewage treatment plants. Hazards of working near or over water include drowning, equipment falling into the water, hypothermia from cold water, and exposure to hazards in the water that can make you sick or hurt you such as sewage, algae, or animals. Today we're going to talk about avoiding death by drowning.

Imagine how quickly you would sink if you fell into the water with your construction gear on—tool belt, overalls, safety boots, and personal protective equipment. In this situation, even a strong swimmer would find it difficult to stay on the surface. So, anytime you work over water, near water, or where the possibility of drowning exists, OSHA requires your employer to provide you with a U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD) like a life jacket or buoyant work vest. OSHA also requires ring buoys (with at least 90 feet of rope) and a rescue boat on site.

If you do fall in the water, try not to panic. Even if you trip over a pile of lumber, bump your head hard, and lose consciousness as you fall into the water, your PFD will keep you afloat and face-up so you can breathe. If you expect to be rescued, let the PFD do its job, and don't waste energy trying to swim. Stay calm while you wait to be rescued. This is where the ring buoys and the rescue boat come in. Hopefully someone saw you (or heard you) go into the

water and will throw you a ring buoy or come to get you in the boat. If no one is coming to rescue you, try to remove your tool belt and boots, and start making your way to shore. Cold water can cause hypothermia within minutes. Even cool water at 50-60 degrees can cause hypothermia if you're in it for an extended period of time.

Remember how much a belly flop hurt when you were a kid, and that was from only a couple of feet up. Hitting the water from 10, 20, or 50 feet up can easily knock you out, dislocate joints, and break bones. PFDs don't prevent falls. Fall protection, such as guardrails and personal fall arrest systems, must be in place if you are working at heights, even over water. Prevent falls into the water in the first place: Eliminate slip and trip hazards. Keep work areas neat. Run cords and hoses up high. Watch your step.

Check your PFD before you put it on. Never use a defective PFD. Adjust the straps so it's snug, but not tight. Snap all the snaps and buckle all the buckles so you don't slip out of it when you hit the water.

It's risky to work alone, especially if you're working near the water. Even if you're just checking the day's work, or picking up a few tools, try to make sure that someone else is around, just in case.

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SAFETY REMINDER

Life jackets save lives; in fact, 85% of boating-related drowning victims were not wearing life jackets.

NOTES:

SPECIAL TOPICS /EMPLOYEE SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS/NOTES: _____

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REVIEWED MSDS # _____ SUBJECT: _____

MEETING DOCUMENTATION:

JOB NAME: _____
 MEETING DATE: _____
 SUPERVISOR: _____
 ATTENDEES: _____

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Types of Hammers

A hammer is a striking tool that is commonly used and too often misused. Before you select a hammer for the job, you need to know what each hammer is designed to do and what materials it can strike safely. Hammers come in various sizes, shapes, and weights. Use the right hammer for the work you're doing, and never use a hammer in a way that it was not designed to be used.

- A **claw hammer** is the most popular hammer for general work. The handle can be made of wood, fiberglass, or steel. Weights range from 16 to 24 ounces. It is used for hammering nails and the claw can be used to remove nails. Never strike a hardened metal surface with a claw hammer.
- A **ball-peen hammer** is usually used in metalworking and has no claw. It is commonly used by a mechanic for shaping metal and closing rivets.
- **Cross- and straight-peen hammers** are used for shaping metal and driving pins and tacks.
- A **club hammer** has a double-faced head and is useful for light demolition work, as well as striking chisels and driving masonry nails.
- A **sledgehammer** is a heavy hammer used for driving stakes, and breaking up concrete, stone, or masonry. It's also useful in demolition.
- A **joiner's mallet** is used for driving chisels or to tap wood joints where a metal hammer would damage the wooden surface of the workpiece.

- A **soft-faced hammer** is typically made of hard and soft rubber, and can be used to prevent damage to the material being struck.

Once you've selected a hammer, inspect it before you begin to work. Make sure the head of the hammer is firmly attached to the handle. Do not use a hammer that has a loose, cracked, or splintered handle. Check the hammer head for dents, cracks, chips, mushrooming, or excessive wear. Never use a damaged or defective hammer; instead, tag it and take it out of service immediately.

Hammers can be dangerous. You could strike a body part (most likely your hand or fingers). Chips, nails, or debris could hit you in the eye or face. Vibration and repetitive motion can cause hand and wrist injuries. Wear gloves that improve your grip and provide some cushioning for your hands. Always wear safety glasses or safety goggles.

Look around before you swing a hammer, especially a sledgehammer. You'll need plenty of room to swing so you won't hurt anyone or catch the hammer on another object. Hold the hammer firmly and be careful if your hands are sweaty. You don't want the hammer to fly out of your hand. Be sure you have good balance and a solid footing. Keep your eyes focused on the object you are hitting.

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SAFETY REMINDER

Don't use the side (or cheek) of a hammer for striking. This area is not hardened and you may damage the tool.

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Pre-Shift Checklist for Forklifts

Before you use any forklift, do a pre-shift inspection so you can find little problems before they become big hazards. Don't use a generic checklist, or go from memory. Use the checklist designed for the specific forklift you will be using.

The following items should be on your forklift inspection checklist in addition to specific items for your forklift:

- Make sure the operator's manual is on the truck and that it is legible.
- Warning decals and placards should be in place and legible—including one stating the forklift's rated capacity.
- Inspect tires: check condition and pressure. Look for cuts, gouges, or other damage.
- Check the condition of the forks, including the top clip retaining pin and the heel. Make sure forks don't have cracks or broken weld points.
- If there are attachments other than forks, make certain that they are connected correctly and working properly.
- Check the fluid levels including oil, water, fuel, hydraulic fluid, and the battery electrolyte.
- Inspect hydraulic hoses, cylinders, fittings, valves, and controls for leaks and damage.
- Look in the operator's compartment and clean out grease, mud, trash, debris, etc.
- If there is supposed to be a fire extinguisher in the cab, make sure that it's there and charged.

- Sit in the operator's seat. Check the seat belt and adjust the mirrors.
- Start the forklift. Check the brakes, parking brake, horn, back-up alarm, rotating or flashing light, and headlights.
- Try all of the lift controls. Make sure that the controls and the lift operate smoothly, and that the controls return to their neutral positions.
- Raise the forks upward to the highest level and then back down to make sure they move with no problems.
- Move the forklift forward, backward, and turn left and right. Accelerating, braking, and steering should all be smooth and solid. Listen for unusual sounds. Park in a new location.
- Shut down the forklift. Check for leaks on the floor or ground where the forklift was originally parked.

If you find that the forklift has leaks, is damaged, needs repairs, or is unsafe in any way, do not use it. Remove it from service, report the problem to your supervisor immediately, and record the problem in the inspection log.

Remember that you have to be trained to operate a forklift and you have to pass a test. Additionally, no one under eighteen years old is ever allowed to operate a forklift.

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SAFETY REMINDER

Riders are only allowed if they have seats and seat belts.

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Ladders

Falls from portable ladders are one of the leading causes of occupational injuries and fatalities. In fact, ladder fall injuries are a significant hazard both on the job and at home. In the U.S., more than 500,000 people per year are treated for ladder-related injuries, and about 300 people die.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health has identified 5 major causes of ladder fall incidents:

- 1. Incorrect extension ladder setup angle:** People tend to set extension ladders at shallower angles than they should. The result can be a bad fall because the ladder base slides out. Follow the 4-to-1 rule.
- 2. Inappropriate ladder selection:** To avoid structural failure, you need to select a ladder with the proper duty rating (weight limit).
- 3. Insufficient ladder inspection:** Regularly maintain and inspect every ladder you use. Look for loose joints; rungs and rails that are slippery, damaged, or cracked; and other problems. Tag damaged ladders and take them out of use.
- 4. Improper ladder use:** Use a ladder as it was intended, watch your step, and don't engage in dangerous behavior like overreaching, carrying objects as you climb, or "hopping" a ladder into a new position while you're standing on it.
- 5. Lack of access to ladder safety tools and information:** Read the labels and warnings on the rails of the ladder. Pay attention during

safety training. If you still have doubts about which ladder to choose, or how to safely use, inspect, or maintain it, talk with your supervisor.

Choose the right ladder for the job. **Consider the material.** Ladders can be made of wood, fiberglass, or aluminum. If you will be working anywhere near electricity or power lines, never use an aluminum ladder because aluminum conducts electricity; fiberglass is the best choice. Be sure to select a ladder that is really **long enough to reach the work.** Remember that you should never stand on either of the top two steps. Get a ladder that will **support the load safely.** Ladders have very specific weight limits. They range from a Type III, light-duty, household ladder with a duty rating of 200 pounds, to a Type IAA, extra-heavy-duty industrial ladder that will support 375 pounds. Make sure you add in the weight of your tools, PPE, and materials.

Here are a few more tips. Set ladders up on level and firm ground. If you're getting off the ladder at the top, it has to extend 36 inches beyond the upper floor or landing. Maintain three points of contact when climbing a ladder; that means you won't be carrying tools or materials in your hands. Only one person should be on a ladder at a time. Never attempt to move a ladder while standing on it.

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SAFETY REMINDER

Never put a ladder on boxes, buckets, stacked bricks, a crate, etc., to reach a little higher.

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Near Misses

You may know a near miss by one of its other names: a close call, a narrow escape, a near hit, or a brush with death. No matter what you call it, a near miss is an unplanned event that didn't result in injury, illness, or damage—but it could have. Sometimes it seems as if luck is the only difference between a near miss and an incident that causes property damage, injuries, or death. If you look at near misses from another angle, and work to take luck out of the equation, near misses can help prevent accidents!

Imagine that someone offered you the power to predict and prevent accidents on the jobsite. Many, perhaps most, accidents are preceded by at least one near miss. You can have the power to prevent future accidents by identifying, reporting, and investigating near misses. Every near miss is a warning or prediction of things to come. Each one gives you an opportunity to figure out what went wrong, alert others about dangerous choices and uncontrolled hazards, and discuss safer ways to complete the task. In a sense, close calls give you the power to anticipate future accidents and—if you take the right steps—to prevent them from happening.

Be sure to report all near misses just as you would any accident. Report them to your supervisor no matter how minor they might seem. Treat the near miss like an accident. Answer the easy questions like who was there, what those people were doing, what work was being done, where it happened, and where people and equipment were positioned. Now go after the harder questions of how and

why the incident happened. Consider bad choices, poor habits, not following procedures or safe work practices, laziness, lack of attention, wrong tools, etc.

Don't stop there. Figure out why you only had a near miss and not an accident. The "why" could help you prevent a future occurrence. For instance, if it wasn't an accident because nobody was in the way when the load fell, then you might consider adding barricades or setting up exclusion zones from now on. This kind of change will prevent everyone from being in the way if a load falls again. The circumstance that made the incident a near miss may help you understand how to prevent an accident.

You might want to keep a list of your own near misses after you've reported them. You might find patterns. Maybe you'll notice that you tend to have close calls when you use a certain type of tool or at certain times of day. Then, you can take steps like getting more training, planning breaks at specific times, and getting enough rest.

Don't ignore near misses just because "nobody got hurt." Luck cannot be the only factor that prevents an accident. If you see a near miss and do nothing, then you're just gambling that you won't get hurt the next time. Don't roll the dice when the wager is your life.

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SAFETY REMINDER
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Near misses are wake-up calls. Don't miss the opportunity to avoid an accident.

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