Stay Safe! Become a “Harness Hero”

Falls are among the most common causes of serious work-related injuries and deaths. Employers must set up the workplace to prevent employees from falling off overhead platforms, elevated work stations or into holes in the floors and walls.

OSHA requires that fall protection be provided at elevations of four feet in general industry workplaces, five feet in shipyards, and six feet in the construction industry. In addition, OSHA requires that fall protection be provided when working over dangerous equipment and machinery, regardless of the fall distance.

OSHA requires employers to:
- Provide working conditions that are free of known dangers.
- Keep floors in work areas in a clean and, so far as possible, a dry condition.

Our Vision

The United Association and its local unions will apply its best practices and resources to build the best educated and safest workforce in all sectors of the piping industry.
• Select and provide required personal protective equipment at no cost to workers.
• Train workers about job hazards in a language they can understand.

The Master Builders’ Association (MBA) of Western PA is bringing fall protection training into the modern day by using an app to train anyone with a Smartphone or tablet. Titled “Harness Hero,” it’s not just a game but also an innovative approach to saving lives in the construction industry. This gaming app will enhance the way construction companies deliver fall protection training.

Released on April 27, 2016, Harness Hero is a video game that engages players in the key decisions of using a fall arrest system. At each step in the game, the player chooses where to anchor, what anchorage device to use, how to set up the harness, what connection device to use, and so on. The player also inspects the equipment along the way for burns, rips, rust and other malfunctions. At the end of each play, the player encounters a fall, and depending on how well they did setting up their fall arrest system, the player will witness either a rescue, a severe injury or even a fatality. Harness Hero was developed under the guidance of safety professionals from all corners of the construction industry.

Start practicing proper fall arrest setup in a fun and safe way. You can download the Harness Hero App from the App Store, Google Play or Amazon.

Cold Weather Hazard Primer

The Center for Construction and Research Training (CPWR) reminds us that construction tasks performed outdoors in cold weather pose specific health hazards. During the winter, UA members face a natural threat to one’s health as our bodies need more energy to stay warm as the temperature drops. Extended exposure to cold or freezing temperatures on the jobsite can lead to health problems.

Typically, jobsite hazards are identified and avoided through planning and adequate communication between management, supervision, foreman, and work crews. When was the last time the subject of a “Tool Box Talk” was a natural occurrence such as a drop in temperature? Freezing rain? The normal reaction would be to add layers of clothing. This may help to maintain body comfort but may add to task complexity by limiting arm or leg movement.

First of all, let us be mindful of the health risks and symptoms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Risk:</th>
<th>Symptoms:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hypothermia</td>
<td>Your temperature drops to 95°F or lower (a normal temperature is 98.6°F). You:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shiver and stomp your feet to stay warm</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Feel unusually tired</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lose coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Become confused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lose consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frostbite</td>
<td>Your skin freezes and becomes:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Red with gray/white patches</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Numb - you cannot feel the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Blistered (in serious cases)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trench Foot</td>
<td>Your foot is:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tingly/itchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Red and blotchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Swollen and/or numb - you cannot feel your foot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Protect yourself in three easy steps:

1 **Dress for the weather...**
   OSHA recommends wearing:
   - Inner/outer layers that will keep you dry;
   - A hat or hood that covers your ears, and a knit mask (if needed);
   - Waterproof and insulated gloves; and
   - Waterproof and insulated boots.
   Carry extra clothes in case the ones you are wearing get wet.

2 **Drink the right liquids...**
   To avoid becoming dehydrated, drink plenty of warm, sweet liquids, such as:
   - Sport drinks
   - Soups
   - Sugar water
   Avoid liquids with caffeine, such as:
   - Coffee
   - Tea
   - Soda
   - Hot chocolate

3 **Be proactive and alert...**
   When working in a cold environment for a long period of time:
   - Learn the signs and symptoms of cold weather illnesses and injuries.
   - Take frequent breaks in a warm area.
   - Work in pairs so you and your coworker can spot the danger signs.
   - Notify your supervisor and get medical help immediately if you or another worker has symptoms of hypothermia or another cold-related illness or injury.
   - Remember - you are at a higher risk if you take certain medications, are in poor physical condition, or suffer from illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension, or cardiovascular disease.

Learn more about how to work safely in cold weather:
Visit the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) at: https://www.osha.gov
Visit the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) at: https://www.cdc.gov/niosh

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**Safety as a Mirror of Engagement and Foundation for Success**

By Mark Breslin, Breslin Strategies, Inc.

What is safety? A set of rules and practices? An organizational value? An individual responsibility? A set of metrics that indicates performance? Risk management and the costs and benefits? Probably all of those, but something a little less visible, I think. Safety is a reflection of the level of engagement that your employees from top to bottom bring to the organization. It is, without question, the most common rallying cry that bonds and unites people in the construction workplace. But it is also the foundation upon which engagement is built—and the effort has some unusual roots based in the following case study.

In 1987 Alcoa Aluminum was in trouble. It was an organization that was underperforming at every level internally, and suffering in the marketplace. Productivity was poor. Quality was poor. Clients were not happy. And the answers that had been enacted to date were ineffective. Along came a leader with a new set of ideas, one that was based on the concept that if you could find a rallying point for everyone, that intersection of belief and buy-in could serve as a cornerstone for progress in all other areas. The CEO Paul O’Neil sifted through recommendations of the many senior level executives—and came away headed in a totally different direction. Instead of focusing on manufacturing processes, quality initiatives or productivity enhancement,
he decided that the starting place would be safety. When he announced this, the market punished him and major brokerages all went to a Sell recommendation.

He had a vision of unifying everyone. Something that everyone could believe in. Something everyone could get behind. Something that benefited everyone and the company. Many were left scratching their heads, wondering if this leader was crazy: A broken company is starting with safety to rebuild itself? But he was on to something powerful. One year after he made that speech to investors, the company hit record profits. By the time he retired 13 years later the company had increased profits 500%. (See his presentation on Safety as the Keystone Habit on YouTube.com.)

It turns out that having that common vision and objective was exactly what the company needed. It was the thing that bonded labor and management. It was a clear indicator by the company that they cared about their employees’ health and welfare. It was a brilliant, simple and effective foundation upon which to build. And build they did.

Alcoa, in a relatively short time, built not only a culture of safety, but also a culture of unity and belief. Most importantly, though, it built a culture of engagement. Engagement in the workplace is what leads to buy-in and commitment. It is the door you have to open for your employees to voluntarily walk through. It is the opportunity to participate and, more importantly, contribute. It is this that we are achieving at a remarkable pace in our industry today.

Many safety award winners are firms that maintain flawless records. Many of my clients will work millions of manhours without lost time incidents. These at face value are strong indicators of vigorous and effective safety programs and training, but what they really reflect most of all is the level of committed engagement that is evident in the workplace.

This lesson is vitally important as we continue our efforts to attract young people to our industry. Generation X and especially the Millennials are seeking engagement as a primary element of their workplace experience. Engagement, even more than money, is the currency of retention. It is the effort made by companies today to show they care and they want and need input and participation by everyone in the workplace.

I think there are lessons to be learned and applied here. There are many other areas of jobsite focus where we can use our “safety engagement” expertise for great dividends. But those are secondary to asking the questions over and over again: “How do we engage our people? How do we obtain their buy-in and commitment? How do we tap their talent and discretionary effort? How do we build off safety, precisely as Alcoa did, to reap long term rewards?

Take a big picture look at safety, engagement and culture. Think about how Alcoa bridged the safety focus to company performance. Ask yourself, what are we doing that works amazingly well and how can we leverage it in other areas of our business? Engagement, once gained, is a powerful tool. Let’s be visionary about how we build the industry of the future based on the hard lessons learned on our way to today’s safety excellence.

Mark Breslin will be a keynote speaker at Coronado Springs and will also present a workshop during the conference. Do not miss this opportunity!
Sprinklerfitters Embrace Safety

Submitted By Guest Writer Rita Neiderheiser

Safety on the job is critically important to the United Association and its locals. We’re dedicated to doing everything we can to ensure the safest and healthiest working environments for our members. By ensuring the health and safety of workers, we also protect our contractors, customers, union, trade, and industry.

One of the ways that the UA and locals implement safety standards is by providing OSHA-authorized training to their members. This authorized training includes the Outreach Training Program for the Construction Industry. The Outreach Program provides training on the recognition, avoidance, abatement, and prevention of safety and health hazards in workplaces in the construction industry.

The 10-hour class is intended to provide workers with awareness of common job-related safety and health hazards, while the 30-hour class is more appropriate for supervisors or workers with some safety responsibility.

One example of a local that has implemented a training program for members based on the OSHA 30-hour class is Sprinkler Fitters Local Union 669. This local has long had OSHA 30-hour instruction that was optional for its members. That training is overseen by their JATC. Classes are taught by OSHA- and JATC-authorized instructors, who are members of their local and working sprinkler fitters as well.

In the spring of 2016, Local 669 and the National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA) contractors agreed during contract negotiations to require an OSHA 30-hour card for all apprentices who will turn out after June 2017. Local 669’s Director of Training was directed to formulate the methods for carrying out this initiative.

The first step was to make sure Local 669 had enough instructors who were qualified and authorized to teach the OSHA 30-hour program. With help from the UA Training Department, Local 669’s Director of Training arranged for an additional eight people to be trained in the OSHA standards class, OSHA 510, which is the prerequisite for becoming an OSHA-authorized construction instructor.

Those eight people will next take the OSHA 500 trainer course; the existing four JATC OSHA-authorized instructors will mentor and guide the new instructor-trainees in the Local 669-specific curriculum. By having these 12 instructors, Local 669 will have the means to provide OSHA 30 training to all their apprentices.

OSHA Issues Final Rule Updating Walking-Working Surfaces

On November 17, 2016 OSHA issued a final rule bringing up to date its general industry Walking-Working Surfaces standards specific to slip, trip, and fall hazards. The effective date of the new language is January 17, 2017. The final rule will include new information that relates to everything from fall protection systems to fixed ladders to training requirements. From the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) we also learn that the supporting materials in the rule also references over
a dozen industry standards, from A1264.1-2007 (Safety Requirements for Workplace Walking/Working Surfaces & Their Access) to Z359.1-2007 (Safety Requirements for Personal Fall Arrest Systems).

OSHA expects the employers to set up the job site or work area to identify and prevent task hazards such as holes in the floor and overhead platforms or elevated work stations that are absent the proper devices to keep craftsmen from falling. Additionally, if a contractor exposes their employees to fall hazards OSHA encourages them to have a fall protection management program. Elements of a fall protection program include worker training on fall protection, with periodic retraining if necessary. All training should be documented.

There is, however, flexibility for the employers as it relates to the use of personal fall prevention systems versus guardrail systems. Let us consider past practice for UA Service Technicians. While servicing HVAC equipment on flat roofs, regardless of how far the unit was from the edge of the roof, the technician was required to wear fall protection. The new final rule includes a “15 foot” guideline which states, “under specified conditions workers performing tasks on low slope-roofs are permitted to work without fall prevention or protection systems when working 15 feet or more from the roof’s edge”.

Let us now examine how OSHA determines the criteria for “specified conditions”:

• There are no other fall hazards, such as skylights or roof hatches
• The work to be performed is infrequent and temporary
• The employer implements and enforces a work rule prohibiting affected workers from going within 15 feet of the roof’s edge without an adequate fall prevention or protection system in place

“The final rule will increase workplace protection from those hazards, especially fall hazards, which are a leading cause of worker deaths and injuries,” said Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health Dr. David Michaels. “OSHA believes advances in technology and greater flexibility will reduce worker deaths and injuries from falls.” The final rule also increases consistency between general and construction industries, which will help employers and workers that work in both industries. To be clear, to set a new rooftop HVAC unit on a new building – wear a harness. To repair or maintain a rooftop HVAC unit post construction – observe the Walking-Working Surfaces final rule.

For more information got to: https://www.osha.gov/walking-working-surfaces/index.html

“The rule affects a wide range of workers, from painters to warehouse workers. It does not change construction or agricultural standards.”

Below is a list of websites and links to help you with your health and safety program. Many of these sites have PowerPoints® and pictures that are free to download for your use. Please take the time to look at a few of these valuable resources.

The Department of Labor
http://www.dol.gov
OSHA Occupational Safety and Health
http://www.osha.gov
Electronic Library of Construction Safety and Health
http://www.elcosh.org
Center of Disease Control and Prevention
http://www.cdc.gov
NIOSH-National Institute Occupational Safety and Health
http://www.cdc.gov/niosh
Safety Toolbox Talks
http://www.Safetytoolboxtalks.com
EPA-Environmental Protection Agency
http://www.epa.gov
CPWR-Center for Construction Research and Training
http://www.cpwr.com
http://esmartmark.org

In Canada, the above safety regulations fall under either the Workers Compensation Board or the Provincial Safety Authority.