

Working at Height

Working on a mine site exposes workers to a wide range of hazards, including falling from heights. A fall hazard exists if no preventions are in place, and a worker could fall from any height and be injured.

Three recent events highlight falling hazards in different but typical work environments in BC mine sites. The first incident involved a scissor lift failing with two workers on the deck. The second involved a worker falling over 3 metres from the top of a mobile ladder. The last incident occurred on a haul truck, where the worker fell approximately 4 metres to the ground while climbing the unit's ladder to access the cab. These preventable incidents resulted in varying degrees of injuries.



General Considerations

1. **Risk Assessment** – Supervisors and workers should perform a risk assessment before all tasks to identify hazards, including a fall hazard.
2. **Toolbox Talk**: Take time to remind workers that a fall from any height can be dangerous. Discuss the importance of maintaining proper contact when ascending, descending, or working from ladders, stairs, and platforms.
3. **Training** – Mine Managers must ensure workers have the appropriate training to complete tasks safely; this includes assessing hazards and selecting the appropriate equipment to complete the work safely.
4. **Personal Protective Equipment** – Workers who are exposed to falling more than three metres must be provided with fall arresting equipment and training on how to use it properly. Ensure equipment is fastened in such a way to minimize fall distance before arrest and is within the prescribed distance set by the Code.
5. **Engineered Controls** – Consider controls, such as permanent fall arrest mounting points, guardrails, or barriers. Ensure anchor points are engineered, rather than improvised.
6. **Maintenance** – Ensure fall arrest equipment, ladders, stairs, and work platforms are regularly inspected and maintained. Never use the equipment for an unintended purpose or beyond its rated capacity. Ensure fall arrest equipment is stored in a clean, dry environment, free from heat sources and chemicals.
7. **House Keeping** – Work areas should be kept clean and free of hazards that could cause a slip, trip, or fall.
8. **Safe Work Procedures (SWP)** – Mine Managers and supervisors should develop safe working procedures when regular or recurring tasks expose workers to a fall from height. The SWP may include steps to ensure workers can safely complete the job while working at height.

Health, Safety and Reclamation Code for Mines in BC (Code)

Mine managers and supervisors are reminded of their responsibility for the well-being of their workers. The elimination of fall hazards is preferred but not always possible. Recognize potential falling hazards and use mitigations and controls, such as the abovementioned considerations, to reduce the risk of falling while working at height.