Fall risk much higher for residential construction workers

Construction workers face several risks while working but one of the biggest safety risks comes from construction falls. Previous reports have shown that falls are still a significant hazard for workers in the construction industry but what kinds of falls are the most dangerous?

A new study found that falls from roofs were the most common type of fall for construction workers in the U.S., with one-third of all fall-related fatal construction accidents being attributed to falls from roofs. The study reported that construction workers most at risk for roof falls were those that worked for small companies, residential construction workers and Hispanic and immigrant workers.

The main findings of the study showed that 34 percent of all construction falls were from roofs in residential construction sites despite the fact that residential construction sites only made up 18 percent of workplace fatalities in the construction industry. The study reported that smaller construction companies that had 10 employers or fewer were more likely to have a worker injured or killed due to a roof fall compared to larger companies.

The increased risk of falling from roofs was highlighted by the finding that Hispanic construction workers accounted for roughly 35 percent of all fatal falls from roofs in the construction industry. The study also found that foreign-born workers had an increased risk of fatally falling from roofs while working compared to all other workers.

The findings show that smaller companies are not properly training their workers or providing them with fall protection

equipment. The researchers concluded that workers in the roofing industry are much more likely to be involved in a fatal workplace injury compared to other construction workers. They said that OHSA and construction companies need to be aware of the falls risks for workers in the residential construction sector to try and improve safety awareness as well as create prevention programs to reduce the high number of fatal injuries caused by falls.

Source: EHS Today, "Falls from Roofs Account for One-Third of Construction Fall Fatalities," Laura Walter, April 16, 2013