

The Big Four in Construction Accidents

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has identified the most common fatal construction accidents, known as the “Big Four.” These are:

Falls from heights

Struck/hit by something at the work site, such as falling tools, equipment, building supplies or swinging beams, pipes and other crane-carried material, and construction vehicles

Caught in between something moving and an unmoving object; examples include being pinned to a wall by a vehicle or motorized construction equipment or being pinned by a collapsed wall or construction material, or being crushed when a scaffold collapses.

Electrical hazards that include coming into contact with power lines, power tools with defective cords, wiring and switches, improperly grounded outlets, and temporary wiring.

A Sample of OSHA Training Requirements

OSHA provides a wide array of training materials so that employers can create a workplace that provides protection from the big four. Some of the hints include:

- Train employees to take basic safety precautions, such as never walking behind a backing vehicle, or walking under a load being lifted by a crane or hoist.
- Provide eye protection for employees using nail guns and similar tools
- Provide toe guards and other systems that can prevent materials from falling off scaffolds and rooftops
- Shore or brace trenches and excavations if people will

be working in them

- Provide ground fault circuit interrupters to prevent electrical shock
- Train employees to check electrical equipment daily for signs of insulation breakdown
- Post signs that warn employees and passersby of hazards

These are but a few of the actions OSHA recommends to employers to help protect construction workers from the Big Four.

Focused Inspections Initiative

In addition to identifying these primary causes of injuries and fatalities on construction sites, OSHA also uses the same categories to conduct worksite inspections. Although OSHA was founded in 1970, it was not until 1994 that OSHA developed its Focused Inspections Initiative that directed compliance officers to focus on the four hazards described above. The thinking behind this initiative was that inspectors should spend most of their time looking for the hazards most likely to cause death and significant workplace injuries.