

Southern California Trade Contractors Association, Inc.

SAFETY NEWSLETTER

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Fall Protection



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A steel erection and roofing contractor was cited and fined for six OSHA violations that led to an amputation, broken bones, and other injuries for three workers.

Last March, employees of an Alabama contractor were working on a roof project when a gust of wind during a severe thunderstorm ripped a large piece of metal decking from the workers' hands. One, who was thrown against the edge of a new metal roof, suffered a left arm amputation as a result.

Another worker sustained a shoulder injury when he was thrown across the roof. The third became wrapped in a sheet of metal and successfully escaped, but was carried over the roof's edge and fell 30 feet to the ground. The result was broken wrists, ribs, tailbone, and pelvis.

OSHA responded with willful and serious violations and fines totaling just over \$69,000. The agency said that the contractor failed to provide fall protection even after an employee requested it and after agreeing to take steps to protect workers from falls.

Three steps to preventing falls:

Plan, provide, and train

Falls are the leading cause of death in construction. But OSHA says they can be prevented by following three simple steps.

Plan ahead to get the job done safely. When working from heights including roofs, employers must plan work to ensure that the job is done safely. Know ahead what tasks and risks are involved, what safety equipment is needed, and what fall protection is best for the job. In roofing, for example, hazards could include holes or skylights and leading edges.

Provide the right equipment. Workers who are 6 feet or more above lower levels are at risk for serious injury or death from falls. Employers must provide fall protection, including the right type of ladders, scaffolds, and safety gear. Workers who use personal fall arrest systems need a harness to tie off to the anchor.

Train everyone to use the equipment safely. OSHA says a key to preventing falls is ensuring that workers understand how equipment should be set up and used. Employers are also required to train workers in hazard recognition and in the care and safe use of all equipment they'll be using on the job.

OSHA has created a webpage at <http://www.OSHA.gov/stopfalls> with detailed information in

English and Spanish on fall protection standards. It offers videos, fact sheets, and educational resources.