

STAYING SAFE WHILE WORKING AT HEIGHTS

Falls from elevated work in agriculture can be severe or fatal. Elevated surfaces include structures like buildings or silos and also machinery and equipment. Working heights over 4 feet from the ground should be considered hazardous, and of course the higher the surface the more hazardous it is.

Here are some safety management points to consider:

- Consider hiring a contractor for any unusual or hazardous elevated jobs like roofing. Choose a contractor committed to working safely for elevated work.
- Install guardrail systems for any elevated locations where work regularly occurs.
- Guard floor and wall openings and access panels that can be fallen through such as on silos.
- Choose machinery and equipment with factory installed guardrail systems.
- Whenever possible, when working with elevated locations without guardrail systems choose to work from articulating boom lifts or scissor lifts rather than the unguarded elevated surface itself.
- DO NOT perform unguarded and unprotected elevated work!
- Agricultural workers should avoid elevated work if they have health challenges or take any medication that affects their vision or balance.
- Install permanent fall protection anchor points for locations that cannot be guarded.
- When performing elevated work that cannot be guarded or otherwise avoided, use fall protection devices. Restraint systems are most desirable – they prevent the worker from going over the edge. Personal fall arrest systems (PFAS) are next best – they don't prevent going off the edge but do stop the fall before hitting the ground.
- If using PFAS, remember to have a rescue plan – rescue can be very difficult in remote areas.
- Designated work areas, such as barns, should have permanently installed fall protection systems to protect workers as they climb on top of equipment to perform maintenance and repair tasks. However, many farm elevated work hazards are found in nondedicated work areas. For example: tractors and combines, which are subject to field breakdowns. A field repair requires the use of a mobile boom arm fall protection system.
- Permanent fall protection systems should be in place for truck loading or tarping operations.
 - There are many aspects to having a full fall protection program. Agricultural programs can mirror programs for general industry.

