

Fatal Falls Among Older Construction Workers

Fatal falls among older construction workers

*Xiuwen Sue Dong, Xuanwen Wang and Christina Daw.
Human Factors, June 2012.*

Overview

The construction workforce has aged rapidly in recent decades, with the average age increasing by about five years. The demographic change was reflected in work-related injuries. The largest proportion of construction fatalities has shifted from the 25-34 age group to the 45-54 age group. To address concerns about the aging construction workforce and potential increased risk of fatal falls among older workers, CPWR researchers looked at trends in fatal falls among construction workers from 1992 through 2008, focusing on construction workers aged 55 and older. Fall data were taken from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Census of Fatal Occupational injuries and rates were calculated by matching employment numbers within age groups using the Current Population Survey.

Key Findings

- From 2003 to 2008, approximately one-fifth of fatal falls in the construction industry occurred among workers aged 55 and older.
- Compared with younger workers (less than 55 years of age), deaths among older workers were 50% more likely to be from falls.
- In 11 of 14 major construction occupations, older workers had significantly higher fall fatality rates than younger workers.
- Roofers, ironworkers, and power line installers were the three occupations with the highest risk of fatal falls for both older and younger workers.
- While falls from roofs were the major cause of fatal falls for both older and younger workers, older workers were more likely than younger workers to die from ladder falls and falls on the same level.
- About one-third of fall decedents among older construction workers were self-employed.
- As the construction workforce continues to age, there is an urgent need to enhance fall prevention efforts, provide work accommodations, and match work capabilities to job tasks.

For more information, contact:

Sue Dong: sdong@cpwr.com

See abstract:

<http://bit.ly/Lkth50>

©2012, CPWR – The Center for Construction Research and Training. CPWR, the research and training arm of the Building and Construction Trades Dept., AFL-CIO, is uniquely situated to serve construction workers, contractors, practitioners, and the scientific community. This card was made possible by a cooperative agreement with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, NIOSH (OH009762). The contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of NIOSH.



THE CENTER FOR CONSTRUCTION
RESEARCH AND TRAINING

WWW.CPWR.COM