

Public Safety Announcement: VOSH Announces New Initiative to Address Recent Increase in Workforce Fatalities

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EINPresswire.com/ -- The Department of Labor and Industry has launched a new emphasis initiative aimed at

preventing workforce fatalities across Virginia. The initiative, carried out through the Virginia Occupational Safety and Health ([VOSH](#)) program, is designed to address the alarming rise in workforce fatalities. The initiative will run from January 2025 to July 2025. Throughout this period, VOSH will publish information to increase awareness and drive more focus on the top contributory hazards that yield workforce fatalities.

“

Ultimately, protecting our workforce is a value and as a value, it is everyone's responsibility to uphold safe work practices and conditions.”

Charles Stiff, DOLI, Deputy Commissioner

Although VOSH works each day to prevent these tragic events, over the next several weeks, VOSH personnel will be driving awareness across Virginia and will begin with a heightened focus on work that is being conducted from heights that require fall protection. Should a VOSH Compliance Officer observe this type of work being performed, it is probable an inspection will be conducted. We kindly urge employers and employees alike to implement measures to ensure the safety of all elevated

work and adhere to the applicable VOSH standards. VOSH is committed to preventing these serious and avoidable tragedies.

“Over the past few months, VOSH has conducted investigations into several preventable incidents related to a number of occupational hazards and our first focus area will be on fall hazards. These incidents can be mitigated through collaboration between employers and employees to establish and adhere to fall protection safety practices”, said Charles Stiff, CSP, Deputy Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry. “Ultimately, protecting



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NEWS RELEASE

The logo for the VA DOLI is pictured.

our workforce is a value and as a value, it is everyone's responsibility to uphold safe work practices and conditions. We believe Virginia's workforce can work injury-free and it is imperative that our workforce returns home safely each day."

Falls are one of the leading causes of fatal accidents in the construction industry. In the last two years, falls accounted for more than 30% of workplace fatalities across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

VOSH strongly encourages employers and employees to engage in a [Safety Stand Down](#) to STOP and TALK about fall protection. This initiative aims to ensure that every employee has the best opportunity to return home to their loved ones in the same condition as when they started their workday.

What is a Safety Stand Down?

It is a voluntary event where employers can provide the workforce information and awareness to work injury-free by conducting:

- Toolbox talks
- Fall hazard inspections of the worksite
- Training on fall protection techniques such as proper installation of guard rails, ladder climbing safety
- Conduct demonstrations on how to safely use a personal fall arrest system.

Best Practices for Workforce Protection

1. Fall Protection is Required When Fall Hazards Cannot Be Eliminated
 - a. VOSH regulations mandate the use of fall protection when construction workers are working at heights of 6 feet (or lower in certain circumstances). Generally, this includes guardrail systems, safety net systems, or personal fall arrest systems.
2. Training is Key
 - a. All employers are required to provide a fall protection training program to workers who may be exposed to fall hazards. Training must include how to recognize and minimize potential fall hazards.
3. Check equipment prior to use
 - a. Inspect all fall protection equipment before use and ensure all equipment fits properly, when applicable
4. Create an Injury Free culture
 - a. Maintaining a safe workplace requires collective effort, a shared commitment among all employees/management to ensure everyone's safety on the job.

VOSH Consultation is available to help small employers voluntarily comply with VOSH Standards and develop a workplace and workforce that are injury-free. Consultation is provided to employers at no cost, without citations or penalties. Services include:

- Identification of safety and health hazards through on-site visits
- Abatement assistance to support hazard correction
- On-site training
- Development of safety and health programs

If you or your business needs further assistance, please contact VOSH on-site consultation services online at https://doli.virginia.gov/consultation_services/ or by email at Consultation@doli.virginia.gov.

About the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry

DOLI is an executive branch agency, under the Virginia Secretary of Labor, overseeing the Virginia Occupational Safety and Health (VOSH) program, Division of Boiler and Pressure Vessel Safety, and Division of Labor and Employment Laws.

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