

Dropped Objects

About 8 minutes to deliver

A tape measure from thirty feet up is a fatality. Toeboards, tethers, and the exclusion zone below.

A one-pound wrench falling thirty feet arrives at about thirty miles an hour and hits with a force in the hundreds of pounds, concentrated on a point. Hard hats are tested for a fraction of that. A dropped tape measure has killed a worker who was wearing his.

THE RULES

1926.501(c) requires protection from falling objects wherever people work below. 1926.502(j) says how:

- Toeboards at least 3½ inches high, no more than a quarter inch off the surface, able to take a 50-pound force in any downward or outward direction.
- Where material is stacked higher than the toeboard, you need paneling or screening from the surface up to the top of the guardrail.
- Or canopies, or barricading the area below and keeping everyone out of it.

ZONES, NOT LUCK

- Barricade below overhead work, and make the barricade mean something. A cone with nobody enforcing it is decoration.
- Nobody works directly below anyone else unless there is hard protection between them.
- Give the zone a margin. Objects bounce, roll and get deflected by scaffold, so the danger area is wider than the drop line.
- Tell the crews below before you start, not while things are coming down.

KEEPING IT UP THERE

This is where the real gains are, because a barricade is a last line.

- Tether the tools. Anything you carry above ground level gets a lanyard to a wrist or a harness D-ring — drills, wrenches, tape measures, radios. Rated tool tethers, not string.
- Closed containers and buckets for fasteners and small parts, never loose in a pocket.
- Hoist and lower with a line. Never throw anything down and never drop it "clear."
- Nothing loose on a rail, a beam, a scaffold plank or a ledge. No coffee cups, no phones, no offcuts. Put it down inside something.
- Sweep the deck before you move, and again before you leave.

BELOW

- Hard hat and chin strap, and look up when you enter an area where work is going on above.
- Do not take the shortcut under the scaffold. That is the whole reason the long way exists.
- Report anything that fell, even if it hit nothing. That one was luck, and luck does not repeat on schedule.

ASK THE CREW

- Is anyone working above anyone else today, and what is between them?
- What tools are going up, and are any of them tethered?
- Has anything come off an edge here in the last month?

29 CFR 1926.501 · 29 CFR 1926.502 · 29 CFR 1926.451

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ATTENDANCE RECORD

Dropped Objects

About 8 minutes to deliver · 29 CFR 1926.501 · 29 CFR 1926.502 · 29 CFR 1926.451

Date

Job / site

Delivered by

Company

#	Print name	Signature	Date
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I delivered this talk and determined it was suitable for this crew and this work.

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