

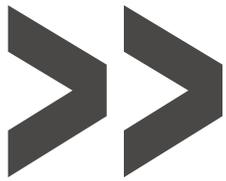
# 15 Steps Supervisors Can Take to Prevent Falls

Supervisors have a legal obligation under the Newfoundland and Labrador Occupational Health and Safety Act to ensure all workers under their supervision are healthy and safe while at the workplace. This can seem very overwhelming at times!

This talk will focus on one hazard that supervisors may be faced with at work – falls! We will break it down into steps of five – five things you can do, five things you can say and five ways you can show how to prevent falls.

## Five Things to do Today:

- 1. Ask workers one question.**  
Ask them if they know how many workers die from falls in this province. Workplace NL reported 8 fatalities due to a fall from heights between 2012 and 2019. Workers need to know that the problem of falls is serious and can be deadly.
- 2. Check for missing guardrails.**  
Guardrails are often the best form of fall protection because they keep workers away from the edge. Keep an eye out for missing guardrails on scaffolds and floor edges.
- 3. Check for floor and roof openings.**  
Too many workers have died after walking backwards into a floor or roof opening. Fasten a sturdy cover securely over the opening and write something like DANGER! OPENING—DO NOT REMOVE! DO NOT LOAD! on it with bright spray paint. Or install guardrails around the opening and put up a sign.
- 4. Look out for ladders.**  
A lot of fall injuries involve ladders, but we use them so often that we don't think about the dangers. Look for workers doing things that increase the risk of injury, such as leaning outside the rails, working off a ladder, or carrying something while climbing.
- 5. Give a safety talk.**  
It's important to talk to workers about the specific fall hazards and fall protection equipment used on your site. Walk the site with them or meet in an area where you can see several fall hazards. Explain to workers what's expected of them



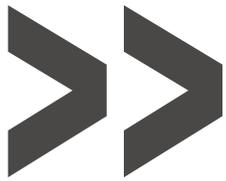
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## Five Things to Tell Workers:

- 1. “Do it right every time.”**  
“It’ll just take a minute” or “I’ve done this a hundred times before” can be a worker’s last words. Your employees are paid to be professionals. That means doing the job safely each time, every time, and all the time.
- 2. “Use your protective equipment.”**  
Workers need to know that wearing the required protective equipment is not an option. It’s mandatory.
- 3. “Look out for your fellow workers.”**  
You expect that workers will fix a problem that endangers other workers—but they need to know that. They should feel comfortable replacing a missing guardrail or a floor opening cover, even if it’s not in their work area.
- 4. “Tell me about the hazards you see.”**  
The law requires workers to inform their supervisor of any hazards that can affect them or other workers. They should feel comfortable calling you if they face a confusing situation or can’t control a hazard. It’s in your best interest to find out before an injury happens—so you can prevent it—rather than afterwards.
- 5. “Know your rights.”**  
If a worker faces a fall hazard and does not believe that they have adequate protection, they have a legal right to refuse the work. It’s better for everyone not to get into this situation in the first place.

## Five ways to Supervise:

- 1. Show that you mean it.**  
More than anything else, your actions demonstrate your commitment to fall prevention. Inspect your site every day. Point out the hazards. Suggest safer ways to do a job (e.g., using an aerial work platform (AWP) instead of a ladder). If all you talk about is productivity and deadlines, you encourage workers to cut corners. If your actions show that you care about your workers, you encourage them to protect themselves.
- 2. Train and inform your workers.**  
Workers who are exposed to a fall hazard and may use a method of fall protection must complete a Workplace NL approved Fall Protection training course. Make sure that workers have taken the re-



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quired training and that it hasn't expired (valid for 3 years). While this training is a good start, workers will also need to receive site-specific training and instruction on the fall hazards they may encounter at the project and the equipment they will be using.

3. **Plan your work.**

Consider ways to avoid working at heights. For example, assemble roofs on the ground and hoist them into place; order prefabricated wall frames or trusses; use extension handles on tools to do painting or window-washing from the ground. List the tasks that workers will do at heights. Go to the jobsite ahead of time and look for fall hazards. Look for places where workers might use ladders and order an AWP instead. Prepare your equipment and other hazard controls in advance.

4. **Enforce the rules.**

Enforce the regulations and your company's policies on fall protection. If workers are ignoring procedures (e.g., not tying off on sloped roofs), insist that they follow the procedures. Explain the consequences of ignoring the rules. Don't be afraid to take disciplinary action when necessary. A company can't afford to tolerate workers who continue to put themselves, other workers, and the business at risk.

5. **Reward good behaviour.**

Recognize workers who follow the rules. "Catch" workers doing something right and thank them for it. A small token of appreciation can make a person's day and reinforce good behaviour.

See the NLCSA's website for printable toolbox talk resources, fall prevention tools as well as a list of upcoming scheduled Fall Protection and Supervisor Health and Safety training courses – [www.nlcsa.com](http://www.nlcsa.com)

Sources:

IHSA Fall Prevention Toolkit – A Guide for Employers and Workers.

[http://www.ihsa.ca/pdfs/magazine/volume\\_13\\_Issue\\_2/Fifteen\\_steps\\_supervisors\\_can\\_take\\_to\\_prevent\\_falls.pdf](http://www.ihsa.ca/pdfs/magazine/volume_13_Issue_2/Fifteen_steps_supervisors_can_take_to_prevent_falls.pdf)

Workplace NL – Fall from Heights Fact Sheet

<https://workplacnl.ca/site/uploads/2020/12/Fall-From-Heights-20201201.pdf>



[www.nlcsa.com](http://www.nlcsa.com)

