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INCIDENT ALERT

A team of carpenters were installing concrete formwork for a concrete shear wall. One of the team members was working near the top of the wall, an elevation of approximately 9 feet above a concrete slab. He was wearing a fall arrest harness and had been equipped with a double lanyard attachment system as well as a positioning attachment at waist level. His work practice was to climb to position using the two lanyards, assuring at least one lanyard was attached at all times. As he was moving across the formwork to a new work location he had disconnected his lanyard system from it’s attachment point. He lost his footing and fell approximately 9 feet to the concrete slab below him. His coworkers administered first aid and called for emergency medical services. He was transported to a nearby hospital where he was diagnosed with a broken arm and compression fractures to his lower back.

LESSONS LEARNED

The form work was a designed system that had been built with a provision for installing handles. Handles had not been installed on the form he was working on. The worker had been attaching his lanyard to reinforcing steel overhead and was using a positioning hook attached to a handle to allow him to use both hands. The handle was not bolted in position, but was left loose to allow him to move it to point to point. Handles were installed after the injury occurred.

A job hazard analysis had been developed for the work, but a foreman/work crew level pre-task plan had not been developed for the day’s activity. Additional planning and thought around the activity might have led to a more safe system for working on the form. For instance, was it necessary to climb the form to begin with, or would the use of a scissors or boom lift have allowed the work to be completed? This type of engineering control could have eliminated the need to use fall arrest equipment. If that was not feasible, were fall arrest systems available that would not have required disconnecting from secure attachment points in order to move (retractable lanyards, rope grab systems, cantenary lines, etc.)?

Construction workers depend heavily on personal protective equipment to assure their safety on jobsites. In many cases PPE is the best option due to changing or unpredictable circumstance. We cannot ignore the fact that the use of personal protective equipment is heavily dependent upon the user. Eliminating the human factor through the use of engineering controls to minimize the potential for injury is always a better solution.
ACTION ITEMS

1. Ask your contractor about their planning processes. Ask if, when planning for safety, the hierarchy of controls is considered (engineering controls, management controls, and personal protective equipment as a last option). Ask about their site specific fall protection requirements, and how those requirements are enforced.

2. Watch for tasks that may result in similar injuries during your walk through. Are people using fall arrest personal protective equipment when working at elevation? Are they properly secured? Have they developed a task plan for the activity?

3. Share this Incident Alert with your contractor and ask them to share it with their workers.

Distribution:
All CPO Staff