

OSHA's National Fall Prevention Stand-Down

By Angelle Bergeron

a presentation on local and regional fatalities, followed by a demonstration of suspension trauma straps by Satterly.

"If someone falls and you can't get to them right away to rescue them, they can only hang in that harness about 15 minutes before the blood supply to the legs is cut off," he explained. "Trauma straps go below their feet and allow them to stand up in the harness."

Finally, Chief David Swanson with the Special Operations Rescue Division of the Houston Fire Department, spoke about how long it takes the fire department to get to a site, set up, and get to an individual who has fallen, Satterly said. "They told some war stories of people who were not wearing their harness when they fell."

In the past, Anslow Bryant's Stand-Downs have begun with instructions on proper inspection and donning of safety harnesses, Satterly added. "I felt like one of the things that is really not talked about is the fall rescue portion, so we went at it from the other end."

Although Anslow Bryant employees talk about safety on a daily basis on job sites, bringing that many employees together in one location and having guest speakers heightens awareness, Satterly said. "Normally, with weekly safety meetings on a job site, people listen and go back to work. This time, after the presentation, several ironworkers came up to me and asked for additional information about the trauma straps. That's my idea of success."

Interactive Events

Having the flexibility of the extended, two-week schedule made it possible for T.A.S. Commercial Concrete Construction, LLC to engage 911 employees – almost 100 percent of its entire staff – in Stand-Down activities.

"We did a lot of different things at different jobsites so more people could participate, and we were able to schedule multiple activities to work around the heavy rains we had in Dallas and Houston at that time," said Tim Manherz, T.A.S. Vice President of Operations.

T.A.S. has been conducting Safety Stand-Downs for several years, but the extended schedule provided the freedom to schedule multiple events during the week and into the following week.

"We did a little bit of everything," said Grace Fox, T.A.S.' Director of Safety and Human Resources. "On one job site, the superintendent bought lunch for everybody. We had a couple vendors visit job sites and do drop tests with a mannequin to demonstrate different effects on the body with fall protection."

The key was that events were interactive, Manherz said. "It's an additional focus where everyone is taking time out to make sure they are completely focused and understanding that safety is extremely important. We want to make sure every-



body understands the safety culture and that there are no shortcuts."

Conducting the Stand-Down – bringing management into the field for special activities and shutting down projects – underscores the significance of each person's value, his safety, Fox said. "If it's important enough to shut down the entire job, it makes the guys in the field realize how important their safety is to the management."

Manherz agreed.

"If we shut down all of the jobs for two hours, the \$50,000 spent sends a strong message to our employees that safety is more important than production," he said. "We are continually working on our company culture to put safety on top, and let all the other company values fall in right behind."

In the past, Stand-Downs were rather liberal in terms of the focus topic, Fox said. Having everyone nationwide concentrate on fall hazards may make it easier to gauge the overall benefits, she said. "The benefit we already recognize is that the employees appreciate the attention to them and realize that they are the most important resource to T.A.S."

T.A.S. has always strived to be an industry leader in safety, aggressively pursuing higher standards even years ago, when safety wasn't "popular," Manherz said. "We want to continue to be an industry leader and show the way for other contractors. Our most important valuable resource at T.A.S. is our employees, so we have to make sure they have all the knowledge, support and backup to be safe out there. We are a large company, but we are still a big family. Every one of those guys out there matters to us."

A Visual Example

During this year's Fall Stand-Down, Ryan Falterman and his dummy sidekick made almost 20 fall demonstrations in the Houston area.

As the south Texas territory Account Sales Manager and Fall Protection Specialist for MSA: The Safety Company, Falterman was challenged by the home office in Cranberry Township, Pennsylvania to make as many demonstrations as he possibly could during the event.



"I actually had so many requests that I had to schedule some demonstrations for the following week," Falterman said. "I still considered those part of the Stand-Down, and the contractors did too."

At the end of it all, Falterman was tired from the grueling schedule, but very excited about the level of participation in this year's event.

"Personally, I think it should be a month like breast cancer awareness," he said. "Construction is up in Texas, with so much expansion and new development, so we have more and more guys using fall protection. There just isn't enough time in the day to conduct all of the training and demonstrations we need to."

Falterman's dummy goes through his paces during each demonstration as he is dropped from different heights, strapped in his harness the right way and the wrong way, providing real-life, graphic depictions of what things can happen to a worker who takes a fall.

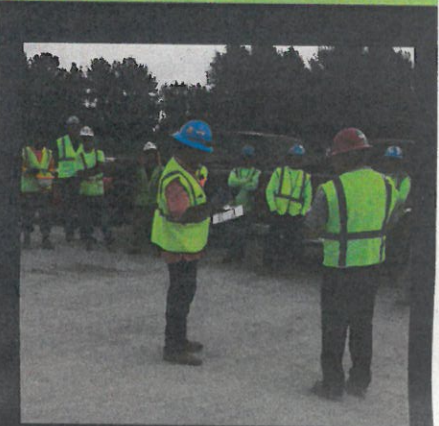
"Falls in the construction market result in the highest rate of fatalities and injuries," Falterman said. "I can't emphasize enough the importance of getting these demonstrations in front of workers in the field."

Falterman was one of a few safety consultants who offered to conduct Stand-Down activities for contractors free of charge. Others included: Enrique Garza with Compliance Safety Consulting, Henry Portillo with HP Safety Consulting and Paul Johnson with Lonquist Risk Management Services.

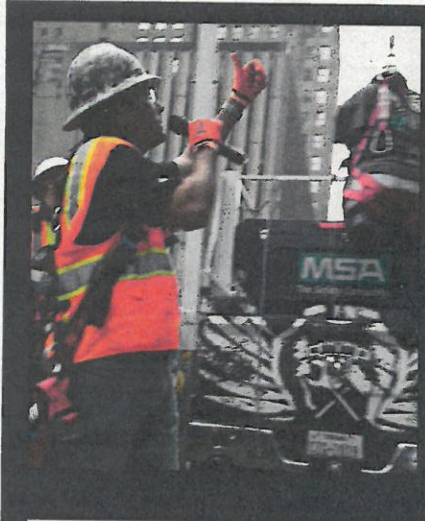
Even outside of the organized Fall Stand-Down, Falterman offers the demonstrations and training free, because it's such a critical component of worker safety, he said.

However, Falterman appreciates the united, nationwide attention and awareness generated by OSHA's National Fall Stand-Down.

"It brings home the severity of what could happen if they aren't hooked up right or don't have proper training," Falterman said. "It also shows the workers that the contractors, the companies they work for, really do care about them and their safety."



AGC Houston Helps Promote Participation in OSHA



More than 85 contractor members of the Houston Chapter of the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC), and a whopping 70 non-member companies, participated in the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) 2015 National Fall Prevention Stand-Down May 4th through 15th to raise awareness and prevent fall hazards in construction.

"According to OSHA, falls are the number one cause of fatalities among construction workers in Region 6 (where Houston is located)," said Kim Mason, Director of Safety Services for AGC's Houston Chapter. "Participating in a national event is a wonderful way to heighten awareness about falls and safety on the job and to reach a broader audience of construction workers who may not deal with the issue of fall protection every day. If participating in this stand-down saves one life, it's worth it."

Fatalities caused by falls from elevation continue to be a leading cause of death for construction workers, accounting for 291 of the 828 construction fatalities recorded in 2013, said Joann Figueroa, Director of OSHA's Houston North area office. Of the total 14 construction fatalities in Houston in fiscal year 2014, five were due to falls.

"Each of those deaths was preventable," Figueroa said. "We firmly believe that falls are preventable. Standards outline minimum requirements, and employers have an obligation to plan the job, provide the right fall protection equipment, and then train everyone to use it safely."

The fatality numbers for Houston indicate a steady decline since FY2009 in the number of construction fatalities overall (36) and the number of fall construction fatalities (16).

However, even one life lost is too many, Figueroa said.

OSHA established the national event in an effort to increase awareness, provide

employers with more tools at their disposal to better reach employees, and to bring the message about fall prevention to a much larger audience - both within the construction industry and the entire community.

The first national Stand-Down was held in 2014 and reached more than 1 million workers. Participants included commercial construction companies of all sizes, residential construction contractors, sub- and independent contractors, highway construction companies, general industry employers, the U.S. Military, other government participants, unions, employer's trade associations, institutes, worker interest organizations, and safety equipment manufacturers.

"We actually got to reach people we normally wouldn't reach," Figueroa said. "Many employers included subs and independent contractors, so it was a real group effort. We had general industry participants as well, so it went beyond construction."

Companies of any size can conduct a Safety Stand-Down by taking a break to have a toolbox talk or another safety activity, such as conducting safety equipment inspections, developing rescue plans, or discussing job specific hazards.

OSHA's website provided suggestions for preparing a successful Stand-Down and listed Stand-Down events that are free and open to the public.

"If a company is small and doesn't have a safety director, they can still use our provided tools to develop a plan for their Stand-Down," Figueroa said. "Even if a contractor is a one-man company, he can participate in the Stand-Down by attending someone else's event."

OSHA's goal for 2015 was to have more than 20,000 Stand-Downs involving more than 3 million workers.

"If we meet this goal, we will have touched almost four out of 10 construction workers in the country, which is extraordinary," Figueroa said.

In an effort to reach more people, OSHA extended the 2015 Fall Stand-Down to span two weeks.

"Our hope is that spreading it out over time would allow more employers to participate, despite weather and deadlines," Figueroa said.

An Increase in Participation

OSHA's total participation numbers weren't in yet by the time this issue went to press. However, if local, AGC Houston Chapter participation is any indication, the 2015 Fall Stand-Down was a huge success.

Mason described AGC Houston's participation in this year's OSHA national Stand-Down as "awesome."

By the end of May, Mason had already tallied participation numbers at more than 11,400. She expected that, when all the numbers were in from contractors, that the 2015 participation would exceed 12,000, and that's despite historic rainfall and flooding on the tail end of the Stand-Down period.

AGC-Houston Chapter has been conducting Stand-Downs for more than 10 years. However, in the past, only one day was dedicated to the event.

"We figured out that, if we provided flexibility, we could double the participation," Mason said.

In 2014, AGC-Houston extended its Fall Stand Down to one week and also joined the OSHA national event, doubling its participation from the previous year to just over 7,000 direct worker participants.

"I had a call from WS Bellows (Construction Corporation) saying that they've had the most active participation they've had in years," she said. "I got an email from Spaw Glass indicating they had 250 employees and 938 subcontractors participate in their Stand-Down. When the workers know that, nationally, everybody is involved, it brings a new level of excitement."

Highlighting Fall Rescue

Steve Satterly, Safety Director for Anslow Bryant Construction, Ltd. agreed that knowing that local Stand-Down events were happening in conjunction with other events nationwide added a degree of significance to employees.

"They all knew that OSHA had this goal to reach 3 million, and they realized the importance because it had been expanded to two weeks," Satterly said. "They had been looking forward to it for weeks."

About 340 Anslow Bryant employees, subcontractors and suppliers gathered on a Wednesday during the Stand-Down at a 20-story high-rise the contractor is building on Katy Freeway.

James Shelton, a Compliance Assistance Specialist from the area OSHA office, gave