



DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

**News Release**

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GOVERNOR

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**HIOSH LAUNCHES FALL PROTECTION INITIATIVES TO PROTECT  
CONSTRUCTION WORKERS**

HONOLULU- The Department of Labor and Industrial Relations ("DLIR") has initiated the Fall Protection Emphasis Program ("FPEP") and the Fall Protection Initiative ("FPI") to respond to the current boom in construction activities throughout the State of Hawaii.

With strong economic growth, homeowners and businesses are increasingly employing contractors to build new homes and renovate existing office spaces, fueling construction activities throughout the state of Hawaii. Historically, construction is a high-risk industry that inherently exposes workers to workplace injuries and fatalities. Nationally, falls from construction projects consistently account for the greatest number of fatalities in the construction industry. Events surrounding these types of accidents often involve a number of factors, including unstable working surfaces, misuse of fall protection equipment, and human error.

HIOSH implemented the FPEP to address fall hazards by increasing its focused enforcement efforts on fall protection hazards to reduce the number of fall-related accidents, injuries, and fatalities at Hawaii's construction jobsites. Specifically, HIOSH stepped up enforcement inspections on construction sites where the circumstances that promote fall hazards are more prevalent.

"As jobs in the construction industry continues to increase, we have seen fall protection violations increase as well," said Nelson B. Befitel, Director of Labor and Industrial Relations. "We want to get the word out on the importance of fall protection to both employees and employers."

"This safety law is a lot like our seatbelt law. It does not take much to comply with the safety procedure, and the failure to do so can be fatal," continued Befitel.

During the period July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003, 173 fall protection related violations were cited as the number one most cited standard by the Hawaii Occupational Safety and Health Division ("HIOSH"). From January 2003 to June 2004, HIOSH conducted 153 inspections that resulted in 40 citations related to violations of the Fall Protection Standard.

State law requires employers to equip or protect workers with the use of either Personal Fall Arrest System (PFAS) or passive fall protections when construction work is performed at heights greater than 6-feet. When used and worn correctly, the PFAS is designed for the worker to don a full body harness, tethered by a shock-absorbing lanyard and properly connected to an anchor point will exert minimal force and serious injury to the worker in the event of a fall.

In its first week of FPEP, HIOSH cited several construction companies for fall-related violations with proposed fines of \$13,250 in the East Honolulu area. During the

next several weeks, geographical sectors throughout the state should expect to see an increase in enforcement efforts to protect the men and women in our island community.

Along with HIOSH's enforcement activity, the DLIR also launched the Fall Protection Initiative ("FPI") in early July 2004 to provide compliance assistance to heighten employers and workers' awareness on the requirements of fall protection. The FPI includes a public awareness campaign, consultation visits and targeted inspections to construction sites. HIOSH and the DLIR will also be working with the construction trades and employer organizations in spreading the word out about fall protection. To date, the FPI has reached 262 construction sites and 1,603 workers throughout the state.

For more information on the Fall Protection Emphasis Program, Fall Protection Initiative and HIOSH's consultation programs, contact Allan M. Yokoyama, OSH Business Safety Facilitator at (808) 586-9078.

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