

For Your Safety: Beware of Gravity

Gravity! It's that natural occurrence that keeps the coffee in your cup and your feet on the ground. Without gravity, life on this planet would be pretty different. From a safety standpoint the effects of gravity can sometimes be dangerous.

A few months ago, 2 scrap yard workers were killed when a dump body of a truck fell on them. Every year, torch cutters are seriously injured when they undercut the pile they are working on and scrap metal falls on them. So how do you protect yourself from falling objects? The answer is pretty obvious: don't let them fall and don't be under them if they do.

Lockout / Tagout to Keep Objects from Falling

When most people hear the words lockout / tagout, they immediately think of shutting off electrical power to prevent shock or accidental startup. In reality lockout / tagout is about controlling all types of energy before servicing machines and equipment. Think about a vertical baler. If you're in the baling chamber and someone bleeds the hydraulic line that holds the head up...gravity wins again. You always want to make sure that before you put your body under something that is held above you by dependence on electrical, hydraulic or pneumatic energy, you use a backup support system. In the case of the baler, blocking the head from underneath or chaining it from above are possible solutions.

Use Your Safety Sense

Many times people get hurt at work when they hurry or they get so focused in their work that they become unaware of the hazards around them. To develop a safety sense is to always be aware of potential hazards and how to control them. Make sure to think about gravity. Before you pull a box down off a top shelf ask yourself: "What could be sitting on top of it that might fall on me?" When you are torching an oddly-shaped piece like a large tank, think about where pieces could fall once they are cut. Make sure you are not under them.

Finally, don't hurry. Don't bypass safety to make quick repairs. If something breaks, take a step back, figure out how to fix it, use the right tools and keep gravity under control.

This e-mail was produced by the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, Inc. For more information, visit us on the Web at www.ISRI.org
For comments or suggestions about *For Your Safety*, e-mail barneyboynton@isri.org

October 10, 2006

