

## ITAC Protects Workers From Falls

Most of us have been up on a ladder at some time. And we probably had a friend, at the bottom, to steady it for us. What if you didn't have someone to keep you safe? Workers face that situation every day. They're inspecting cranes, washing windows, working on tanks, trimming trees. And Industrial TurnAround Corporation's (ITAC) Fall Protection division is working hard to keep them safe.

"Falls are usually at or near the top of the list of workplace hazards every year. Our job is to figure out how to keep those workers safe," says Bruce Simms, the Virginia Tech grad who helped create ITAC Fall Protection over eleven years ago. His team approaches the problem from every angle. "We might use design to eliminate the need to get up there at all. We might install a guardrail system to prevent falling. Or we could design an anchor point or lifeline for a worker's harness."

ITAC Fall Protection works with some major clients, including NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Amtrak and the U.S. Botanic Garden at the Capitol. For NASA, ITAC worked on the Space Center's 37A launch pad, Parachute and refurbishment buildings, a refueling tanker and most recently, to install roof guardrails on multiple buildings. They've also designed and installed projects to protect Amtrak electricians who work on signal bridges and Botanic Garden staff who maintain the conservatory's steam lines and trim trees. ITAC has even worked at Kings Dominion amusement park, providing the engineering, electrical construction and fall protection for the new Intimidator 305 roller coaster.

ITAC's services don't end with an engineer's design. As a full-service firm, they also build and install the solution. They can fabricate materials or get them from a supplier and ITAC's construction group can install solutions they, or someone else, designed. Afterwards, ITAC can train employees on how to use the equipment and periodically inspect what they've installed to ensure it's in good condition.

Serious injuries and deaths from falls have been increasing, despite new regulations and products. That's why ITAC provides training on the equipment it installs. Simms says, "I think the primary cause is a lack of education about the products being bought. Recently, my colleague John Whitty, Director of Projects and Specialty Services, and I did research on temporary anchors and presented it at an industry symposium. We found that these products have a lot of limitations and unfortunately, the products' marketing doesn't help users understand the limitations. So there is a lot of misuse and abuse of this equipment, and they're not keeping workers as safe as they could be."

## Fall Statistics

The source of this information is OSHA, the Department of Labor (DOL), or the Center for Disease Control (CDC):

- 14% of fall accidents are fatal.
- Since 1992 serious injuries and fatalities due to *falls* have been on the rise in spite of new regulations and better operations and practices.
- In 2006 there were **809** fall accident fatalities in the USA; from roofs, unprotected walks, ladders, scaffolding, staging, etc.

Lawsuits follow many of the thousands of fall injuries that occur every year and lawyers usually need technical experts. Simms has worked on several cases over the years and testified for both sides. "We analyze the work site and conditions as part of our investigation. Employers don't always provide adequate safety measures. But sometimes workers don't do what they're supposed to, and we can prove that," said Simms.

There aren't many companies like ITAC Fall Protection Services with full design/build capabilities. Simms says, "When we started twelve years ago, we were one of the first to actually have laborers in the field installing equipment we were designing."

The ITAC team can handle any size project from a small job involving one engineering field, to a large multi-million dollar, multi-discipline project. A great example of the latter is the steel mill in Alabama that the company is currently working on. It's the largest, privately-owned

construction site in the world. And speaking of the world, ITAC regularly crosses international time zones to perform work, recently taking on jobs in Canada, Trinidad and Tobago.

Asked what makes ITAC Fall Protection Services, the go-to guys in the industry, Simms says the

**ITAC FALL PROTECTION TEAM**

Bruce Simms - Director

Jason Coker

Lee Barnes

Chris Link

Rodney Point

Kristopher Gorter

John Bollinger

Brad Kennedy

Wayne Wilson

Robbie Wilson

Carl McBride

answer is multi-layered, “We have a history and a tradition of excellence; we are associated with all the major manufacturers of fall protection equipment; we’ve gained the trust of companies that make fall protection equipment, like DBI and Miller. Companies want their equipment to be used correctly on a job site in a safe and professional manor and they have trusted ITAC to design and install systems using their equipment.”

The team also prides itself on customer service, which explains the high degree of repeat business. According to Simms, ITAC Fall Protection has clients today who have been there since the beginning, twelve years ago.

The industry also recognizes the deep experience present within the ITAC team has. Simms, a structural engineer, has presented technical sessions at numerous institutions and regional and national meetings. These include the VA Tech-Richmond Training Center, National Safety Council’s Safety Expo, and most recently the American Society of Safety Engineers where Simms presented research the International Symposium for Fall Protection. He has also written articles for *Facility and Safety Management* magazine and even authored a chapter of the textbook *Introduction to Fall Protection*, the standard for safety engineering students.

Workplace falls can be tragic. But ITAC is hard at work on every front of Fall Protection – designing and building systems to keep workers safe, educating workers on how to keep themselves safe and advancing the entire industry with their research.