

ITAC Presents Research Findings at International Fall Protection Symposium

In the U.S. in 2009 there were 537 fall-related deaths on job sites. Overall, the number of work related injuries and deaths have decreased thanks to advancements in technology. Yet, the number of fall-related deaths and injuries are increasing.

Last June, The International Society for Fall Protection (ISFP) held their annual symposium in Las Vegas to discuss this disturbing trend. Their goal: to answer the question of why, in spite of new regulations and better operations, there has not been a decrease in the number of deaths and injuries related to falls.

Among the panel of experts, was Bruce Simms, Director of Fall Protection Services for Industrial Turnaround Corporation (ITAC), an engineering and construction firm headquartered in Chester, VA. Simms and colleague John Whitty, Director of Projects and Specialty Services for ITAC, presented research on temporary anchorages. Workers use this technology to prevent falling from elevated jobsites on a temporary basis. They're designed to be quick, easy and inexpensive ways for workers to connect to an existing structure and are often hooked to scaffolding, pipes, angle irons, railings or beams. ITAC found that, while these products play a vital role in worker safety, they have limitations that aren't fully explained in the products' marketing materials.

More than Numbers

Every day, two workers in this country die via a fall to another level.

From 3/19/03 until 5/4/10, 3,486 Americans were killed in combat.

Over that same period, fall-related deaths accounted for 4,899 Americans killed.

This translates into approximately 12,000 widows and orphans.

"A lot of products coming on the market are touted as easy, affordable ways for construction workers to anchor in order to avoid a fall. Yet our research found that these products have limitations and often, the product's marketing doesn't help the worker understand what these limitations are," says Simms, a Virginia Tech grad who helped create ITAC Fall Protection over eleven years ago. "While those products play an

important role, this confusion results in misuse and abuse of anchor equipment, which is unsafe for the worker."

ITAC FALL PROTECTION TEAM

Bruce Simms - Director
Jason Coker
Lee Barnes
Chris Link
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Kristopher Gorter
John Bollinger
Brad Kennedy
Wayne Wilson
Robbie Wilson
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The ISFP symposium followed the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) meeting in Baltimore. The ASSE annual meeting showcases safety equipment suppliers and features technical continuing education sessions. Overall, about 25,000 people attended, and ITAC had a particularly strong showing.

The entire Fall Protection group attended, employees from other ITAC disciplines like engineering and construction and CEO Jon Loftis were also present.

"Attending a national safety show helped our ITAC coworkers see the name and reputation ITAC has attained over the last decade in the Fall Protection world. All the people in the upper echelons of the industry know who ITAC is."

The Regulatory Environment

This is a dynamic time for the fall protection industry because of the new technologies, practices and updated standards. These standards include the new ANSI Z359 code for Fall Protection Code. These standards were developed by the American National Standard Institute in conjunction with the ASSE and were completely revamped in 2007. Discussion at both ISFP and ASSE shows centered around how these standards will affect not only the U.S. but also standards around the world.

"While OSHA continues to be the monitoring body for the industry, many have adopted the ANSI 359 standard or the "Fall Protection Code," Says Simms. "It creates a level playing field and is a resource for clients who want to know what type of employee training is needed."

ANSI is not mandatory, yet its adoption continues to expand because those in the industry believe following the standards saves lives. And that's what it's all about.