



Fall Prevention in Sawmills

A 5-Minute Safety Training Aid

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The Texas sawmill and wood industry contributes about \$33 billion and 144,500 jobs to the state's economic activity each year.^{1,2} However, falls in the industry are common and costly. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) cites working in a sawmill as one of the most dangerous occupations in the United States.³ Woodworking employees often suffer from lacerations, amputations, severed fingers, and blindness.⁴ Stumbling over debris, slipping on sawdust, falling from a ladder, or jumping off of a truck can result in serious injury. Sawmill hazards are even more dangerous when environmental conditions are factored in, such as bad weather or uneven, unstable, or rough terrain.



Keep Passages Clear

Maintaining a clean work area can prevent many falls. Routine cleanup of scraps can prevent tripping. If visibility is reduced as a result of [wood dust](#) in the air, install [dust collection equipment](#) or [other controls](#). It is also wise to ensure that frequently traveled paths are located away from machinery.

Other ways to prevent falls include building passages for workers to cross over conveyors. OSHA regulation [1926.502](#) requires the use of top-level and mid-level guardrails even with low-level elevated catwalks, operator stations, and access platforms.



Choose the Right Ladder

Selecting the safest ladder for the job is important. Workers on stepladders should be able to work comfortably without having to reach above their heads, lean out to the sides, or stand on a level above the highest safe-rated step. OSHA regulation [1926.1053](#) requires that portable ladders extend at least 3 feet beyond the upper landing and that fixed ladders extend at least 3.5 feet beyond the landing.

¹ Lufkin Texas Economic Development, "Forest Products," Website. <https://www.lufkinedc.com/target-industries/forest-products/0/>. Accessed March 3, 2022.

² Adams, Sumner, "A Look at the Texas Lumber Industry." Website. <https://www.timbertown.com/a-look-at-the-texas-lumber-industry/>. Accessed March 3, 2022.

³ Occupational Safety and Health Administration, "Sawmills." Website. <https://www.osha.gov/sawmills>. Accessed March 3, 2022.

⁴ Occupational Safety and Health Administration, "Sawmills." Website. <https://www.osha.gov/sawmills>. Accessed March 3, 2022.



Reduce Falls

Use these additional tips to prevent falls in sawmills.

- Keep passageways and workstations free of dust, debris, oil, grease, and water.
- Provide sufficient containers for trash.
- Provide cleaning stations for protective eyewear so employees can see potential fall hazards while wearing eye protection.
- Keep passageways and work areas well lit.
- Locate often-traveled paths away from machinery.
- Inspect and maintain the non-slip safety feet of portable ladders.
- Install non-slip coatings on stairs and in areas prone to slipping hazards.
- Never climb on logs or a log deck, especially when the deck is wet.



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