Workplace Learning System

Weekly Safety Briefings

Week 33 – Monday, August 10 – Friday, August 14, 2026

Struck-By Hazards: The Hit You Never Saw Coming

Introduction – Struck-By Hazards: The Hit You Never Saw Coming

Introduction for Leaders:

Struck-by hazards are one of OSHA's Fatal Four, the four hazard categories responsible for most workplace fatalities in construction and industrial environments and they are falls, struck-by objects, electrocutions, and caught-in/between accidents. But this category is not limited to construction. It shows up in warehouses, loading docks, manufacturing floors, outdoor worksites, and anywhere that vehicles, equipment, tools, or materials move through shared space with people.

This week we will be focused on struck by hazards. What makes struck-by hazards especially serious is that they happen fast. There is no warning sign, no slow buildup, no moment where the person thinks something might be wrong. One second everything is fine. The next it is not. The only real protection is position, visibility, and habits built before the moment ever arrives. That is what this week is about.

How to Frame This Week:

- Bring it to your specific environment. Walk through what vehicles, equipment, and overhead work are present in your area and name them by name. Generic struck-by conversations do not land the same way as ones tied to the forklift that runs your aisle every morning.
- Monday carries the weekly challenge. Remind the team mid-week and use Friday for the report-back.
- Be honest about the fact that struck-by incidents often involve people doing completely normal things. The person who gets hit is usually not doing anything wrong. That is part of what makes this hazard worth taking seriously.

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Monday – What Struck-By Actually Means

Discussion:

Struck-by is exactly what it sounds like: a person is hit by a moving object, a vehicle, a piece of equipment, falling material, or a flying projectile. It is one of the most common causes of serious workplace injury and death, and it is consistently underestimated as a hazard because most of the time, the conditions that produce it look completely ordinary. The forklift that runs the same aisle it has always run. The crane that swings loads the same way it always swings them. The tool that sits on the shelf where it always sits until it falls.

There is no version of a struck-by incident where the person had time to think through their response. Physics do not allow it. A vehicle or load moving at even moderate speed carries enough force to cause fatal injury, and the contact is over before the nervous system has finished processing that it started. This is a hazard that lives entirely in the prevention side of the equation. Once contact is happening, it is too late.

The four main categories of struck-by hazards:

Struck by a vehicle or mobile equipment. Forklifts, trucks, delivery vehicles, heavy equipment, and even golf carts and pallet jacks operating in areas where pedestrians are present. The most dangerous moments are reversing, turning at blind corners, and operating in low-visibility or high-noise conditions where the operator cannot hear or see a person in the path.

Struck by a falling object. Tools, materials, equipment, and unsecured loads falling from elevation. This category includes items falling from shelving, off elevated work platforms, from crane loads, and from workers overhead who have not secured their tools or materials.

Struck by a swinging or shifting load. Suspended loads on cranes, hoists, or forklifts can swing unpredictably when a load shifts, a line breaks, or an operator makes an unexpected movement. Standing in the swing radius of a suspended load is one of the most consistently preventable causes of struck-by fatalities.

Struck by a flying object or projectile. Fragments from grinding, cutting, or fastener tools. Debris ejected from equipment under pressure. Materials under tension that snap and whip back. These incidents often happen so fast and from such unexpected directions that standard awareness is insufficient without engineering controls.

Weekly Challenge:

This week, each person has one assignment: identify at least one spot in your work area where a vehicle, a falling object, a swinging load, or a flying projectile could reach you without warning. Think about where you routinely stand, walk, or work and ask whether anything moving through that space could get to you before you could get out of the way. We will hear what people found on Friday.

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Tuesday – Vehicles and Mobile Equipment: The Biggest Mover of People

Discussion:

Vehicle and mobile equipment incidents are the most common type of struck-by fatality in warehouse and industrial environments. And the thing that makes them so persistent is that both sides of the incident, the operator and the pedestrian, usually believe the situation is under control right up until the moment it is not. The operator thinks the pedestrian sees them. The pedestrian thinks the operator sees them. Neither assumption is verified. And in a high-noise, high-traffic environment with limited sightlines, that assumption gap is where people get killed.

What makes vehicle and pedestrian interactions dangerous:

Operator blind spots are real and significant. Every piece of mobile equipment has areas the operator cannot see from the cab or seat. For forklifts, these include directly in front when carrying a forward load, tight corners at low mast height, and the rear swing arc during turns. Pedestrians who assume they are visible because they can see the operator are making a dangerous assumption.

Reversing is the highest-risk movement. Most struck-by vehicle fatalities involve a vehicle moving in reverse. Backup alarms help but do not eliminate the hazard, especially in environments where alarm noise blends with background noise. Never assume a reversing vehicle has seen you.

Speed feels slower than it is. A forklift traveling at five miles per hour covers about seven feet per second. A pedestrian stepping into an aisle from a blind corner has no realistic chance of avoiding contact if a vehicle is already in motion toward them at that distance. The margin is much smaller than it feels.

A real-world example:

A receiving clerk at a distribution center had worked the same dock for three years. Part of her routine was crossing the main forklift aisle to access the printer on the far side of the floor, a path she took dozens of times each shift without incident. On a busy Friday afternoon, a forklift operator turned into the aisle carrying a high load that blocked his forward view. He was traveling at a normal operating speed. She stepped into the aisle from between two parked trailers at the same moment he turned in. He did not see her until after the impact. She sustained serious injuries to her lower body and was out of work for eight months. The operator had not done anything wrong. She had not done anything wrong. Two people following their normal routines in a space where those routines had never been formally reconciled.

Team member engagement:

"Where in this facility do you walk or stand near moving vehicles as part of your normal routine? Have you ever verified that the operator can actually see you from where you are?"

"Have you ever had a close call with a vehicle or piece of mobile equipment? What happened and what was the gap that nearly caused contact?"

"What would change about how you move through this space if you assumed the operator could not see you until you had confirmed eye contact?"

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Wednesday– Falling Objects and Overhead Work

Discussion:

Falling objects are one of those hazards that feels controllable right up until something falls. The tool on the edge of the elevated platform looks stable. The unsecured pipe on the shelf looks like it has always been fine. The worker overhead looks like they have a good grip. None of those observations tell you whether the object will fall in the next thirty seconds. And the person below has no way of knowing when it does.

What makes this hazard particularly difficult is that the person at risk is almost never the person who created the hazard. The worker on the ground did not put the tool on the edge of the platform. They did not stack the material unevenly on the upper shelf. They just happened to be standing underneath it. That disconnect between who creates the hazard and who absorbs the consequence is exactly why this category requires active attention from everyone in the environment, not just the people working at height.

The most common sources of falling object incidents:

- Tools and equipment set down on elevated surfaces without being secured or tethered, particularly during maintenance or installation work.
- Improperly stacked or stored materials on elevated shelving, racking, or mezzanines that shift or tip when the structure is bumped or loaded unevenly.
- Crane and hoist loads that are improperly rigged, overloaded, or shifted during movement.
- Loose debris on elevated work platforms, including scrap material, fasteners, and packaging that workers do not think of as hazards because they are small.
- Materials staged at the edge of an elevated surface without toe boards, barriers, or awareness that people are working below.

A real-world example:

A maintenance technician was performing routine work on a conveyor system on a mezzanine level while production continued on the floor below. He set a heavy adjustable wrench on the conveyor frame while he used both hands to reposition a guard panel. The vibration from the running conveyor walked the wrench to the edge. It fell approximately eighteen feet and struck a production worker below on the shoulder, fracturing her clavicle and two ribs. The technician had not thought of the wrench as a hazard because he was not done with it. He planned to pick it back up in a minute. The production worker had no way of knowing anyone was working directly above her. Neither person had been told to coordinate their work with the other.

Team member engagement:

"Is there anywhere in our environment where people regularly work overhead while others work below? Is that coordination ever formally communicated, or does it just happen?"

"Have you ever set a tool down somewhere elevated and walked away from it, even temporarily? What was your thinking about whether it was secure?"

"How is your weekly challenge going? Have you identified any spot where you routinely stand where something above you could reach you?"

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Thursday – Loads, Lines, and Projectiles

Discussion:

Today we are covering two struck-by categories that do not get as much attention as vehicles and falling objects but are responsible for a significant number of serious injuries: swinging and shifting loads, and flying objects or projectiles. Both share a common characteristic: they reach the person faster than any reasonable reaction can prevent, and the only protection is positioning and controls established before the hazard activates.

Swinging and shifting loads. Any suspended load on a crane, hoist, or forklift can swing when the load shifts, when momentum carries it past the stop point, or when a line or rigging component fails. The swing radius of even a moderate load can cover a significant area quickly. Standing inside that radius while a load is suspended, even briefly, even to guide the load, is one of the most consistently preventable causes of struck-by fatalities. The rule is simple: never stand under or inside the swing radius of a suspended load. Never. Not to guide it, not to check the rigging, not for a second.

Flying objects and projectiles. Grinding discs that shatter at operating speed. Fasteners ejected from pneumatic tools. Debris launched from cutting equipment. Materials under tension that snap and whip back across a significant distance. These incidents happen in fractions of a second and from directions the person did not anticipate. Engineering controls, guards, and barriers are the primary defense. Eye and face protection is the last line. Neither is optional when projectile risk is present.

The line of fire concept:

The line of fire is the path a moving object, load, or projectile would travel if something went wrong right now. Before you position yourself anywhere near a suspended load, a pressurized line, a cutting or grinding operation, or a tensioned cable, ask yourself: if something fails in the next thirty seconds, where does it go? If the answer includes where you are standing, move.

A real-world example:

A crew was rigging a steel beam for placement during a structural steel job. The signal person stepped in close to help guide the beam into position as the crane operator lowered it. As the beam neared the connection point, it caught a slight crosswind and swung approximately four feet to the right. The signal person, who was standing inside what would have been the swing radius, took a direct hit to the chest and upper arm. He survived but sustained multiple fractures and required surgery. The job had been done the same way dozens of times before without incident. Nobody had designated a formal stay-back zone for the swing radius on that particular lift. The familiarity of the task had gradually eliminated the caution the task required.

Team member engagement:

"In our work, where are the moments when someone could be standing in the line of fire without fully realizing it? Walk me through a specific task.

"Has anyone here ever seen or been near a load shift, a line snap, or a projectile incident? What happened and where were you standing?"

"What would change about how you position yourself during rigging, lifting, or cutting operations if you applied the line of fire question every time?"

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Friday – Week Wrap-Up

Discussion:

This week we covered one of the most serious and most preventable hazard categories in any physical work environment. We broke down the four types of struck-by hazards and looked honestly at why each one persists despite being well understood. We talked about vehicle and pedestrian interaction, the blind spots that are real, the assumptions that are dangerous, and the complacency that builds in shared spaces over time. We went through falling objects and why the person who creates the hazard and the person who absorbs the consequence are almost never the same person. And we covered suspended loads and projectiles through the lens of the line of fire, the simple question of where does it go if something fails right now, and whether you are in that path.

The common thread through all of it is position. Struck-by incidents are almost always about where a person was standing when something happened that nobody expected. You cannot always predict what is going to move or fall or swing. You can make decisions about where you are standing that keep you out of the path when it does. That habit, built deliberately and maintained consistently, is what this week was trying to give everyone on this team.

Weekly Challenge Report-Back:

At the start of the week, each person was asked to identify at least one spot in their work area where a vehicle, a falling object, a swinging load, or a projectile could reach them without warning. Let's hear what people found.

"What spot did you identify? What was it, and what could reach you there?"

"Did identifying it change how you positioned yourself near it this week, even once?"

"Did anyone find something that needs to be addressed, a blind corner, an unsecured overhead load, a swing radius with no stay-back zone? Let's name it and make sure it gets handled.

Closing questions:

"What is one specific habit around positioning that you are going to carry out of this week into how you move through this environment every day?"

"Is there a task we do regularly where nobody has formally thought through the line of fire? What is it and what should we do about it?"