

## CONTROLLING THE RISK OF DROPPED OBJECTS

As we celebrate our final safety bulletin for 2023, promoting safety remains our top priority. This month our safety bulletin delves into a crucial concern within the work-at-height industry: the risk of objects being dropped during operations. We understand the potential hazards of dropped objects and are committed to equipping you with practical solutions for a safer work environment.

Whenever work at height is taking place, the main risk is always that of workers falling. Added to that is the risk that members performing work at height may drop objects from a height. Falling objects can cause significant damage to property and even lead to a fatality. In the link below you will see different objects being dropped on a watermelon and the damage it causes. Should the dropped object fall from a greater height or should the object be bigger or heavier, the result could be significantly more devastating.

Follow the link: [Ever thought a helmet is not important? Think Again!](#)

To mitigate the risk of objects being dropped, there are practical steps you can take:

The first, most obvious, solution is to provide every person working at height with a helmet. When considering what helmet would be appropriate, you need to think about what the workers would be exposed to during their regular work. The type of exposure will determine if a worker requires a construction helmet (EN397) or a mountaineering/industrial work-at-height helmet (EN12492). In some cases the dual standard is required. Unfortunately, helmets are only tested for smaller items dropped from low levels and won't protect a worker against bigger items falling from higher levels. Often, objects falling a large distance exceed what helmets are rated for and, therefore, helmets cannot be your only mitigation against dropped objects.



What if people are kept out of the area where objects can fall? As a standard, the drop zone (area where there is a risk of objects falling from above) is 25% of the height of the structure (a 1:4 ratio). That means that for a 50 m structure the drop zone would extend 12.5m from the base of the structure in every direction. This area is demarcated using barricading. In all cases, a physical barricade is most effective, but it is not always practical. In such cases a visual barricade, like candy tape (red-and-white tape), is used. No person may cross this barricade while work at height is taking place.

Staying out of the drop zone is the most effective way to guard people against dropped objects and this should be strictly implemented by the site supervisor. However, this mitigation does not guard against potential damage caused to property (for example damage to a vehicle, equipment placed in the drop zone or the dropped object itself). The best mitigation is to prevent objects from falling. This can be done by using tool lanyards, tool jackets or tool pouches.

Follow the link: [Towerman Tool Pouch](#)



Tool lanyards, the Gravity Tool Jacket Vest and the Gravity Towerman Tool Pouch were designed to prevent equipment from falling, and, as a bonus, they were designed in such a way that the user cannot exceed the weight restriction when it comes to carrying tools at height. However, these were only designed for small items like handheld tools and loose items.



For single items, like a spanner or a hammer, workers must make use of tool lanyards.



For multiple items workers can make use of the Gravity Tool Jacket Vest.



For smaller items, like nuts and bolts, we recommend making use of the Gravity Towerman Tool Pouch as depicted.

Due to the complexities of a work-at-height site, you cannot simply rely on any one of these mitigations to guard people and property against falling objects. You will most often need to employ all these procedures to keep everyone safe and protect property.

**REMEMBER: HELMET ON, BARRICADE YOUR DROP ZONE, AND SECURE YOUR TOOLS.**

You can find more safety bulletins on our website by following the link: [Gravity 2023 Safety Bulletins](https://www.gravitygh.co.za/safety-bulletins)

