

Tarping Related Fall Injuries to Drivers

What happened

Covering a load to protect it during transit can be dangerous. Falling off the load or trailer is no small matter. Following are summaries of fall injuries sustained while covering and uncovering loads with tarps. These examples are just a few of the many tarping related fall injuries experienced every year by Washington state truck drivers. Of the injuries summarized, the shortest amount of time lost from work was two months. Companies and drivers can't afford these types of injuries.

- A 49-year-old driver on his truck tarping a load fell off when the wind blew the tarp. He landed on his right shoulder, spraining it and developing serious complications. Workers' compensation costs were \$170,000, including 227 weeks of time-loss.
- A 40-year-old driver tarping a load of wood chips fell from the catwalk of a trailer and landed on his left outstretched arm, breaking his wrist. Workers' compensation costs were \$9,000, including 8 weeks of time-loss.
- A 45-year-old driver on his truck tarping a load of steel tubing fell to the pavement when the heel of his boot caught on a load strap. He sprained his neck, shoulder, and back. Workers' compensation costs were \$28,000, including 40 weeks of time-loss.
- A 31-year-old driver taking a cord off of a tarp on top of a load of plywood slipped and fell 10 feet to the ground, spraining and fracturing his right ankle. Workers' compensation costs were \$18,000, including 12 weeks of time-loss.

How can you prevent similar incidents?

- Provide/carry a ladder to access the top of the load.
- Have drivers use tarping stations that customers make available.
- Equip dump trucks with auto tarping systems.
- Have drivers share techniques or tricks with other drivers.
- Use a forklift to get tarps on top of load, but don't ride the forks along with the tarp.
- Develop and document a fall prevention plan.
- Consider updating to curtain side vans.
- Have drivers roll tarps out forward rather than pulling backwards, so edges and voids are visible.



A series of work-related safety and health injury prevention tips for the trucking industry



Driver using a tarping station.

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