

Falls from elevation are a leading cause of work-related hospitalizations in Washington's Transportation and Warehousing industry.

Tarping a load can pose risks for falls, but these injuries **can be prevented!** Proper tarp training, a developed Accident Prevention Plan, three points of contact on ladders, and an updated Job Hazard Analysis are key to prevent falls while tarping.

### Truck driver falls from trailer ladder while freeing stuck tarp

An experienced truck driver started his shift around 5 a.m. His job was delivering bark and wood products with a semi-truck and trailer. The trailer had an open top with a manual side roll tarp to cover it.

At around 5:30 a.m., the driver was closing the tarp with the manual hand crank when it became stuck. He climbed a fixed ladder on the front of the trailer located between the cab of the truck and the trailer to free the tarp.

From the ladder, he tried to shake the tarp free. His hand slipped off of the slick tarp and he fell more than eight feet to the ground. He first landed on his feet before falling on his back. He was unable to get off the ground.

A loader operator found the driver on the ground after approximately twenty minutes. The loader operator called the manager, who called 911.

The driver was taken to the hospital for trauma care. He suffered multiple fractures in his back, ribs and tail bone. He needed surgery to repair the fractures and spent time in an inpatient rehabilitation facility for recovery.



**Incident 1:** The truck and trailer involved in incident. The driver fell off of the ladder on the front of the trailer.



**Incident 1:** The manual crank handle used to move the tarp. The driver used this handle until the tarp became stuck.

### Truck driver fractures both arms in fall while tarping load

An experienced truck driver was tarping a tall load on a flatbed trailer in his employer's yard with another worker. Tarping was not an everyday task for the workers. They used a work platform attached to a forklift to gain access to the top of the load to make sure the corners of the plastic tarp were not snagged.

The truck driver moved off of the work platform and onto the top of the load to fix the tarp while the other worker operated the forklift. As he walked across the load, he fell off.

He struck the flatbed trailer before hitting the ground, landing on his elbows. The fall was more than twelve feet.

The driver suffered multiple fractures to both arms and a dislocated right elbow. He required surgery to repair the fractures.



**Incident 2:** The trailer and load in the photo are similar to the trailer and load in the second incident where the truck driver fell from the top of the load.

## Recommendations

### Training

- When **tarping flatbed loads**, train workers to:
  - Use a tarping station or machine, when available.
  - Operate elevated work platforms safely, following manufacturer guidelines.
  - Crawl on the load or tarp instead of standing or walking on it. Test for voids under the tarp before committing your weight.
  - Roll tarps forward, not backward, to keep edges and voids visible.
- When **using ladders**, train workers to:
  - Never stand on or lean over the top rail of the ladder.
  - Maintain three points of contact with the ladder.
  - Keep centered on the ladder and avoid overreaching.
  - Avoid carrying objects while climbing the ladder.
- **Take your time.** Train workers not to rush while tarping.

### Equipment

- Keep roll tarp systems maintained in good working condition.
- Make sure ladders are equipped with non-slip rungs.

### Plan for Safety

- **Job Hazard Analysis.** Create a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) specific for each type of trailer tarping operation. Each JHA should be updated regularly. Include workers in creating and updating JHA.
- **Mechanical Tarping.** Employers should mandate the use of mechanical tarping systems whenever possible.
- **Use Elevating Work Platforms.** If there is no mechanical tarping system, use an elevating work platform to gain access to the top of the load and to secure the tarp, when feasible. Never exit elevated work platform to gain access to the top of the load.
- **Team Work.** Work in teams to tarp loads.
- **Personal Protective Equipment.** Employers should provide workers with non-slip gloves to wear while climbing ladders. Workers should wear sturdy boots appropriate for the weather conditions.

## Requirements

### Accident Prevention Program (APP)

- Employers must develop a formal accident prevention program that is outlined in writing. The program must be tailored to the needs of your particular workplace or operation and to the types of hazards involved. See [WAC 296-800-14005\(1\)](#)

### Hazard Assessment

- Employers must perform a hazard assessment for PPE. You must look for and identify hazards or potential hazards in your workplace and determine if PPE is necessary on the job. **You should take active steps to get rid of all identified hazards:**
  - Consider other ways to get hazardous jobs done.
  - Reduce hazardous materials or processes.
  - Apply engineering controls to reduce or eliminate hazards.

See [WAC 296-800-16005](#)

### Reporting

- Employers are required to contact DOSH within 8 hours of a workplace fatality or in-patient hospitalization of any employee and within 24 hours of a non-hospitalized amputation or loss of an eye of any employee. See [WAC 296-27-031](#)

### Resources

Use the [TIRES Trucking Safety Program Development](#) tool to create an Accident Prevention Program (APP) for your company that includes hazard solutions, PPE requirements, and training to prevent falls from trailers.

Trucking Injury Reduction Emphasis (TIRES):  
<http://www.keeptruckingsafe.org/>

Safety and Health Core Rules, Chapter 296-800 WAC: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=296-800>

L&I's Consultation Program offers confidential, no-fee, professional advice and assistance to Washington businesses. To request an L&I Consultation go to: [lni.wa.gov/safety-health/preventing-injuries-illnesses/request-consultation/](http://lni.wa.gov/safety-health/preventing-injuries-illnesses/request-consultation/)