

Safety Videos

by Patricia McDaniel

Federal and state regulations make the employer responsible for providing a safe work site. The regulations are complex, but basically it's the employer's job to train employees so that they can recognize and avoid hazards. Yeah, I know, we all hate to hear about what we should be doing. If we wanted to be told what to do, we wouldn't be in business for ourselves.



Like many in the trades, I've had a somewhat resentful attitude toward safety rules and regulations. However, a recent incident on the job, which could easily have been a fatal accident, caused me to reevaluate my priorities and get serious about safety training.

I decided to build a comprehensive in-house training program. Because falls are responsible for so many construction fatalities, we made fall protection and ladder safety high-priority topics.

I went in search of training videos that would adequately address these concerns, in the naive belief that I could delegate all my training responsibilities to the VCR. My goal was to find a video that could fully explain the topics and, hopefully, leave a lasting impression of their importance. In all, I watched seven videos and selected four keepers for use as part of our training program. It's

important to keep in mind that the videos themselves don't make a complete safety program. They are, however, a good place to start.

The Keepers

Watch That First Step: Employee Training Video for OSHA's Stairways and Ladders Standard; (NAHB; 800/223-2665; www.builderbooks.com; \$30): Although the production values in this 21-minute video (and manual) are not the greatest, a thorough review of rules, tips, and techniques for the safe use of ladders and stairways is presented, including a fun segment with Cliff the Climber demonstrating all the wrong things to do.

The Fall Protection Compliance Kit: An Employer's Guide to OSHA's Fall Protection Regulation (1995; NAHB; 800/223-2665; www.builderbooks.com; \$87.40): This video comes as part of a larger kit that walks the employer through the creation of a job-site-specific fall protection plan. The kit also contains an 80-page safety manual, and even better, there's a CD with the complete manual in both WordPerfect and MS Word formats for customized use in your safety program.

This is the only video I found that focuses on fall protection in a residential setting. The video is well produced, though I found its "video game" format a bit cutesy. It covers the basics quickly and concisely, including unprotected edges (stairwells, floor openings, etc.); leading edges (subfloor installation creates a leading edge); conventional fall protection (harness and anchor); and alternative work practices.

Alternative work practices are allowed when conventional protection would create a greater hazard and must be defined in a job-site-specific fall protection plan. However, the sections on alternative work practices are vague, and the video leaves the training in those areas

"to your employer," which isn't exactly what I was looking for. This video is worth watching for its focus on residential construction, but it doesn't serve as a stand-alone solution to all your training needs.

Fall Protection #602 (1995; The Training Network, Long Island Productions; 800/397-5215; www.tni-online.com; \$150): This 30-minute video is staged mostly on industrial and commercial construction sites, but it's worth seeing for its thorough coverage of the subject (even though it includes types of exposures rarely encountered in residential work). Of all the videos I viewed, it's the longest and provides the most information. The topics include guardrails, safety nets, and personal fall arrest systems, or harnesses. The video reviews several safety systems, discussing where each is used and why it's needed: Positioning device systems (used to maintain position, say, when working on the side of a large storage tank); warning lines (placed 6 feet away from an unprotected or leading edge); safety monitoring; temporary covers; protection from falling objects; and written fall-protection plans. All of these have their place and purpose on a residential site, though not precisely as pictured. This video presents lots of job-site scenery and good demonstrations of the various systems.

Whether or not your work involves many hours of harness time, I also recommend the 21-minute video, *Fall Protection #482* (1996; The Training Network; 800/397-5215; \$130). It covers much of the same material as video #602, but again it's in an industrial plant setting. However, it features the most focused segment on harnesses, reviewing the features of several different types of personal fall-arrest systems. The problem with harnesses is that we rarely use them (even when we should),

and no one is thoroughly experienced in their use. Better familiarity with the equipment lowers the barrier to more frequent use.

Others of Note

I also watched The Training Network's 19-minute *High-Impact Fall Prevention #850* (1997; 800/397-5215; \$495.95). This video is shot in a manufacturing setting and features graphic, blood-and-guts reenactments of actual accidents. This video is not for the squeamish and, given its high price tag and the manufacturing setting, it didn't make the cut for us.

I watched two other videos from The

Training Network (the company offers more than 1,200 safety and human resources videos). *Fall Protection #1083* (1996; \$90) speeds through the subject in an industrial setting. Although I liked the crash-test dummies, six minutes is too brief a time to give such a complicated subject the proper treatment.

Fall Protection #393 (1995; \$130) is more thorough and nicely paced at 12 minutes. The setting is industrial, and the authors do a good job of presentation. However, the coverage is not as thorough as the 30-minute #602 video; the additional 18 minutes and extra \$20 for that video are a better investment.

I didn't find the Holy Grail solution I was in search of, but four of the videos (the two NAHB videos and The Training Network's #602 and #482) are a worthwhile addition to our library. The videos provide basic training and raise worker awareness; we're making them a standard part of our job-site safety training and hope to supplement them soon with videos on hazardous materials, electrical hazards, and other topics. 

Patricia McDaniel is the president of Boardwalk Builders in Rehoboth Beach, Del.