

# Top Two Catastrophic Injury Causes...and How to Prevent Them

Don't Break a Life  
**PREVENT**  
CATASTROPHIC  
INJURIES

## #1 Motor Vehicle Accidents

Anyone who operates a motor vehicle as part of his or her job is at risk of being involved in a roadway crash. But unlike other workplaces, employers cannot control roadway conditions. So what can employers do?



The Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS), in partnership with OSHA and NHTSA, say there are several steps employers can take to help protect their employees and their companies from the risk of motor vehicle accidents. A summary of key steps includes:

### Policies

- Assign a key member of the management team the responsibility and authority to set and enforce comprehensive driver safety policies.
- Require the use of seat belts by all who use vehicles on the job.

### Fleet Management

- Select company vehicles that offer the highest possible levels of occupant protection.
- Implement a vehicle maintenance program that includes pre-trip inspections, immediate withdrawal from service of any vehicle with mechanical defects, and regularly scheduled inspections and maintenance.

### Safety Programs

- Teach workers strategies for recognizing and managing driver fatigue and distractions.
- Provide training to workers operating specialized motor vehicles or equipment.
- Emphasize to workers the need to follow safe driving practices on and off the job.

### Driver Performance

- Ensure that workers assigned to drive on the job have a valid driver's license and one that is appropriate for the type of vehicle to be driven.
- Check driving records of prospective employees, and perform periodic re-checks after hiring.
- Maintain complete and accurate records of workers' driving performance.
- Stipulate that driving is a task requiring full attention – instruct employees to avoid placing or taking cell phone calls or engaging in other distractions while driving.

For more information on NETS' comprehensive 10-step program to help employers minimize their risk for motor vehicle accidents, go to [www.trafficsafety.org](http://www.trafficsafety.org).

## #2 Falls from Heights

Falls from heights are the second leading cause of catastrophic workplace accidents, according to IWIF statistics.



Any unprotected side or edge that is 4 feet or more above a lower level should be protected by a guardrail system, safety net system, or personal fall arrest system.

OSHA suggests employers take the following steps to protect workers from falls from heights:

### General Fall Safety

- Develop, implement, and enforce a comprehensive, written fall prevention program that complies with all applicable OSHA fall prevention standards.
- Assign a competent person to inspect the worksite before work begins. Identify potential fall hazards such as unprotected floor openings/edges, shafts, skylights, stairwells, or roof openings/edges.
- Require, provide, and ensure the use of appropriate fall prevention systems that use covers or screens; railings or guardrails; or personal fall arrest systems. Ensure that the appropriate fall protection equipment is in good condition.
- Provide training to each worker who may be exposed to a fall hazard. The training should enable each worker to recognize fall hazards and the procedure to follow for minimizing these hazards.
- Periodically conduct scheduled and unscheduled inspections to ensure that the fall prevention system is used and maintained correctly and provides adequate protection.
- When working up on a ladder, don't overreach beyond the side rails to conduct work. Climb down and move the ladder to get proper access to your work area.

For additional recommendations on developing and implementing fall prevention techniques, go to [www.osha.gov/slc/fallprotection/](http://www.osha.gov/slc/fallprotection/) or talk with your IWIF Loss Control or SERMA Risk Management Consultant.

This report is advisory only. It may not list all hazards or conditions in need of correction in your workplace. IWIF assumes no liability for identification or correction of conditions or hazards. Safety and health remain your responsibility.