



# The Office of Compliance

From office areas to construction work sites, fall hazards exist in all work environments and they can lead to serious injury and even death. The Office of Compliance (OOC) would like to communicate the importance of fall prevention

to employees and employing offices in the Legislative Branch. Falls can result from unsafe working conditions, such as unstable working surfaces, ladders that are not safely positioned, and misuse of fall protection. Moreover, statistics also show that maintenance workers are injured and killed annually while working from heights during construction activities. In 2010, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported 208,470 cases of non-fatal falls in the private industry and 609 fatal falls. Fatal falls accounted for 14% of worker fatalities for 2010 with 11% of all fatalities coming from falls to a lower level. According to the OOC's FY 2010 Annual Report, inspectors found 178 fall protection hazards in the Legislative Branch during the 111th Congress.

Falls can be prevented and fall prevention measures are required by the Congressional Accountability Act (CAA), which applies the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHAct) to the Legislative Branch. OSHAct requires the following:

- aisles and passageways be kept clear and in good repair, with no obstructions either across or within aisles that could create a fall hazard (29 CFR§1910.22);
- floors of every workroom be maintained, so far as practicable, in a dry condition: "Where wet processes are used, drainage shall be maintained and false floors, platforms, mats or other dry standing places shall be provided, where practicable, or appropriate waterproof footgear shall be provided" (29 CFR§1910.141(a)(3)(iii));
- floor openings for stairways, ladder ways, and hatchways be guarded by either standing railings on all open sides or by floor opening covers of standard strength and construction accompanied by a removable railing with a toe board for infrequently used openings (29 CFR§1910.23(a)); and
- scaffolds and fall protection systems meet certain safety requirements and employers must provide training on proper scaffold use and fall protection practices (29 CFR§1926 Subparts L and M).

Section 215 of the CAA requires that public areas and the workplace be free of recognized hazards that are likely to cause death or serious injury. Covered employing offices must comply with these workplace safety requirements. A "Request for Inspection" to determine if an unsafe working condition exists may be made with the OOC, which enforces the OSHAct in the Legislative Branch, by either an employing office or a covered employee. A covered employee may elect to remain anonymous when requesting an inspection. A "Request for Inspection" form can be obtained from the OOC website or by visiting the office. Once a request is filed, the General Counsel of the OOC is responsible for investigating the suspected unsafe working condition.

If you know or suspect a safety or health hazard in a Congressional work space, please contact the OOC at (202) 724-9250 or visit [www.compliance.gov](http://www.compliance.gov) for more information.