



# OSHA COMPLIANCE ON SITES NEAR WATER



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Managing a site on or close to water presents a host of risks for your workers. Several Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements apply that you should consider whenever beginning a job close to water. Avoiding OSHA citations and worker injuries that lead to elevated workers' compensation costs means examining site-specific risks and taking steps to adapt your safety program appropriately. To ensure your company's compliance and your workers' safety, adjust your company's safety program and relevant company safety policies to regulations that apply to any worksite located on or near water.

Proper communication of the policy and training of both workers and supervisors ensures that employee behavior remains in compliance with OSHA regulations and prevents workplace accidents and injuries.

## Safety Equipment

The type of personal protective equipment (PPE) that workers must wear depends on the characteristics of the worksite. For construction sites near water, required equipment might include the following:

- Safety harnesses/belts
- Safety lines
- Safety nets
- Life preservers and personal floatation devices
- Safety boats

## Maintenance of Safety Equipment

- All PPE must be inspected prior to and periodically during each use. Equipment that shows signs of mildew, broken fibers, deterioration, or excessive wear or damage should be removed from service and

destroyed, as should fall-arrest equipment that is subjected to a worker fall while on duty.

- Nets, ropes, harnesses, belts, and lanyards should not be allowed to become wet. If they do, they must be thoroughly dried before storing in a dry location away from sources of deterioration, such as caustic or corrosive materials.
- Safety body belts may be used only as positioning devices in aerial lift equipment and are acceptable as an alternative to harnesses only in this application.

### Safety Procedures

There are several precautions that must be provided for employees working in areas that are not protected by passive fall protection systems (OSHA-specified railings or nets) and present the danger of drowning:

- Workers must wear U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets or buoyant work vests.
- There must be a skiff or emergency rescue boat equipped with paddles or oars, a ring buoy or other life preserver, and a reach extension device available.
- Where there is water current, the rescue boat must be motorized or occupied at all times. Occupants of the rescue boat must wear life vests.

### Barges and Work Platforms

When using aerial lifts on floating work platforms, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Only lifts with manufacturer approval to work on floating vessels may be used.
- Personnel, equipment, and materials may not exceed the load rating capacity or cause the risk of capsize.
- Make basic information about the lift available in a site-specific safety plan, including the following:
  - Load rating for platform
  - Considerations for eliminating risk of capsize
  - Aerial lift capabilities/limitations
  - Fall protection requirements/required PPE
  - Use of controlled access zone (CAZ) or perimeter guarding
- Full-body harnesses or body belts must be used and connected to approved anchorage points, which may not be moved while occupied unless designed to do so.
- Employees working on unguarded decks must wear protective flotation devices.
- Ground-mounted scaffold systems used on barges or floating platforms must be securely anchored to the structure and must be designed to eliminate the risk of capsize.

### Safety Plan

In order to prevent on-site injuries and fatalities, your workers must be properly trained in your company's safety plan and on proper use of PPE.

For assistance in developing a comprehensive safety program, contact one of [NGWA's preferred insurance providers](#).