Synopsis: Falls are among the most common causes of serious work-related injuries and deaths. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, falls to a lower level accounted for over 540 workplace fatalities in 2012 alone. MIT is committed to protecting its community members from exposure to falls. If you work from, or supervise someone who works from heights, this SOP is for you.

Summary Procedures:

Hierarchy of Fall Protection

#1 ELIMINATE THE HAZARD
- Always preferred!
- Bring work to ground level.
- Design changes to allow work from ground level.

#2 PASSIVE FALL RERAINT
- Physical barriers such as guardrails or parapets.
- Minimum training recommended.

#3 ACTIVE FALL RERAINT
- Restraint system required (full-body harness, lanyard and anchor).
- "Authorized Employee" training required.
- Written rescue plan required.

#4 FALL ARREST
- Personal Fall Arrest System (PFAS).
- "Authorized Employee" training required.
- Written rescue plan required.

#5 CONTROLLED ACCESS ZONE
- Least preferred!
- Conventional fall protection is not feasible.
- For construction applications only.
- Training required.

Requires pre-work planning

Hierarchy of Fall Protection:

Reducing or eliminating the hazard is always the first step in fall protection. As the steps in the hierarchy progress, so does the risk.

General Industry:
Operations and maintenance; trigger height= 4 ft. above walking/working surface.

Construction: Construction, alterations, modifications, demolition, roofing, painting; trigger height= 6 ft. above walking/working surface (scaffolding 10 ft.).

Guardrails/Parapets: 39-44 in. high; withstand 200 lbs. at top rail; guardrails must have mid-rail and a toeboard is tools or material can fall to lower level.

Skylights: 200-lb. force cover; guardrail; or fall restraint/fall arrest. Skylight= floor opening if unprotected.

Fall Restraint: Worker’s center of gravity cannot fall over the unprotected edge in any direction.

Fall Arrest: Personal Fall Arrest System (PFAS); must be designed by a Competent Person in Fall Protection; basic system may include: full-body harness, 6 ft. shock-absorbing lanyard, 5,000-lb. anchorage (per person), minimum clearance= 17.5 ft. from anchor, rescue plan.

Rescue Plan: Prompt rescue- danger of suspension trauma for fallen employee.

Pre-Use Inspection: Required to inspect all PPE prior to use; replace equipment that is damaged or that has been subject to a fall.

Floor Opening: An opening measuring 12 in. or more in its least dimension, in any floor, platform, pavement, or yard through which persons may fall; such as a hatchway, stair or ladder opening, pit, or large manhole.

Wall Opening: An opening at least 30 inches high and 18 in. wide, in any wall or partition, through which persons may fall; such as a yard-arm doorway or chute opening.