



Safety Talk

Dangers in using Stilts for elevated work

Workers and employers should note: There are a number of dangers in using stilts to perform work such as plastering or hanging drywall. The use of stilts raises a worker's center of gravity. Movement and balance is restricted, putting greater strain on a worker's muscles and joints. The risk of injury is increased if stilts are worn for extended periods of time. Certain actions such as bending and twisting can be hazardous because of the limited range of movement that the stilts allow. Keeping the back straight while lifting is difficult when using stilts,

S

Slipping risks can be a source of problems for the user and need to be carefully examined. Spilled joint compound and caulking products produce very slippery conditions. Water and ice are also common hazards on a construction site.

T

Trip hazards are plentiful and need to be eliminated. Rolling stock, such as conduit and pipe can be a real trip hazard. General debris and stored materials are obstacles that need to be removed before working on stilts.

L

Inspection of the equipment and the work area is very important. Refer to the manufacturer for their recommendations on equipment inspections and maintenance. Critical components include the straps, shoes, bushings, springs and the flexible joints. Worn straps can break, resulting in loss of stability and connection to the stilt. Shoes can lose their traction, resulting in slips. Uneven wear of shoes can cause the stilt to lean and shift the center of balance.

T

Level surfaces are essential when using stilts. Look for floor cutouts, holes and changes in elevations. Doorways that are too low for people elevated on stilts may result in head injuries. Guardrails need to be raised for workers on stilts to eliminate the fall risk. Never use stilts on a scaffold, stairway, ladder, or aerial lift. Look above for obstructions.

T

Trained workers should be the only authorized stilt users. They should be instructed in the hazards, proper equipment inspections, and the safe use requirements established by your company or the manufacturer.

Other Safe Use Tips:

- Watch for mobile equipment that might cross your path, such as rolling scaffolds, pallet jacks, and forklifts, which can cause serious injuries if you are struck by those moving objects.
- Use common sense when putting on the stilts. Avoid using an unstable support such as a stepladder. Attach the stilts while **sitting** on a stable, level surface with the stilts below the knee level. A stack of sheetrock or elevated floor (i.e., loading dock) may be available. **Do Not** lean against a wall while stepping onto the stilt and then lean over to secure the straps. This is very unstable and may result in a fall.
- Avoid lifting materials and tools from below knee height. Use a helper. Avoid supporting heavy materials above the shoulders, which can cause back, knee and shoulder injuries.

