OSHA®

Occupational Safety and Health Administration

Communication Tower Safety

ACE School and RUS Symposium
May 16, 2018

OSHA Communication Tower Initiatives

- OSHA initiated a focus on identifying and addressing hazards after seeing a spike in fatalities in 2013 and 2014.

- Relatively new industry, growing fast, changing technology, high fatality rate.

OSHA Communication Tower Initiatives

- Collaboration with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) began in 2014.
- FCC and OSHA workshops on tower climber safety with stakeholder participation held in October 2014 and in February 2016.
- Communication Tower Best Practices Document published in May 2017.
- OSHA continues addressing hazardous conditions through outreach and enforcement.

OSHA Communication Tower Initiatives

- Rulemaking initiated to potentially develop new standard.
- Request for Information (RFI) published in 2015.
- Next step is soliciting input from small businesses on draft regulatory framework.
- Volunteers welcome to provide feedback and input by participating in upcoming teleconferences.

Occupational Hazards

- Most common cause of fatalities is falls.
- As towers age and larger antennas are added, collapses due to structural issues, alterations, and overloading have increased.
- Lack of proper engineering and rigging plans increases risks.

Occupational Hazards

- Obstructed climbing paths and compromised ladder safety devices.
- Environmental hazards include extreme heat/cold, storms, insects/animals.
- Insufficient training, time pressure, fatigue.

Communication Tower Fatalities

Year	Number of Fatalities
2012	2
2013	12
2014	12
2015	3
2016	6
2017	7

Applicable Standards

- OSHA Standards:
  - There is currently no dedicated OSHA standard for communication tower work activities.
  - Various OSHA standards apply to particular work activities involving communication towers, including standards for fall protection, ladders, cranes, PPE, hoists, etc.
  - Construction and/or general industry standards may apply depending on activity.

Applicable Standards

- Industry Consensus Standards:
  - **TIA 322**: Loading, Analysis, and Design Criteria Related to the Installation, Alteration and Maintenance of Communication Structures
  - **TIA 222**: Structural Standards for Antenna Supporting Structures and Antennas
  - **ASSE/ANSI A10.48**: Criteria for Safety Practices with the Construction, Demolition, Modification and Maintenance of Communication Structures

Safety Promotion

- Tower Industry Registered Apprenticeship Program (TIRAP)
- National Wireless Safety Alliance (NWSA)
- National Association of Tower Erectors (NATE) Campaign, “100% Tie-Off 24/7”
- OSHA supports and encourages safety initiatives, awareness, communication

Upcoming Issues: Large Increase in Tower Work

- FCC spectrum auction and resulting broadcast tower work (“repack”)
- FirstNet and antenna upgrades
- 5G deployment
- Small cells

How can OSHA Support you?

- Information and Outreach?
- Partnerships?
- Consultation and Compliance Assistance?
- General Inquiries: 800-321-6742 (OSHA)

More Information

OSHA Communication Tower Topics Page

(from OSHA home page under “Topics”)

https://www.osha.gov/doc/topics/communicationtower/index.html

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