KENTUCKY
AGC Self Insurers' Fund

Fatal Injury Trends in the Construction Industry

Serious injuries and fatalities in construction are **not random** – they are strongly linked to a small set of **high-energy, high-consequence hazards**. STCKY's (Stuff That Can Kill You) are those situations where, if something goes wrong, the outcome is likely life-altering or fatal, not just a first-aid case. Our goal is to **find and control STCKY's before they find us.**

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1. What's Killing Construction Workers?

Most construction fatalities continue to come from a few recurring categories (often called the "Fatal Four"):

- **Falls from height** – roofs, scaffolds, ladders, leading edges
- **Struck-by** – moving equipment, loads, falling tools/materials
- **Caught-in / Caught-between** – trench cave-ins, equipment pinch points, between vehicles and fixed objects
- **Electrocution** – contact with overhead or buried power lines, energized parts

These are **STCKY events**: when they go wrong, the likelihood of a fatal or life-altering outcome is high.

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2. How to Recognize a STCKY Hazard

A task is likely a STCKY when one or more of these are present:

- **High energy:** gravity (heights, suspended loads), electricity, equipment in motion, stored pressure, high-speed tools
- **Loss of control = catastrophic:** one mistake can mean a fall, crush, or electrocution
- **Limited protection from failure:** working outside guardrails, under a suspended load, in an unprotected trench, near live power

On pre-task plans (PTPs/JHAs), specifically ask:

"What here is Stuff That Can Kill You?"

If you find a STCKY, it **must** trigger a higher level of control and supervision.

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3. Controlling STCKY Hazards – Go Beyond Compliance

For STCKY hazards, "bare minimum OSHA compliance" is **not enough**. Use the **hierarchy of controls** with a SIF mindset:

1. **Eliminate / Avoid**
    - Use prefab to reduce work at height.
    - Change the sequence to avoid exposure near live traffic or energized gear.
2. **Substitute / Engineer**
    - Use guardrails, perimeter protection, decking, and leading-edge barriers instead of relying only on harnesses.
    - Use trench boxes/shoring for all qualifying excavations, not just "the deep ones."
    - Use equipment-free zones and physical barricades around swing radii, crane work, and overhead lifts.
3. **Administrative Controls**
    - STCKY-specific **permits or authorizations** (e.g., "Work at Height Permit," "Energized Work Permit," "Excavation Permit").
    - **Pre-lift meetings**, task briefings, and "pause points" built into the plan to reassess risk.
    - Clear exclusion zones with spotters and signage.
4. **PPE (Last Line of Defense)**
    - Fall protection (full-body harness, inspected and anchored correctly).
    - Arc-rated clothing, gloves, face shields when working near electrical hazards.
    - High-visibility gear around equipment and traffic.

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4. Critical Roles & Behaviors

Supervisors & Foremen

- Lead STCKY discussions in daily huddles: "Where can we get killed today?"
- Refuse to start work when critical controls (guardrails, trench protection, lockout/tagout, line clearance) are missing.
- Verify controls in the field – don't "plan on paper only."

Workers

- Speak up when something **feels** like a STCKY. If your gut says "this can kill me," you're probably right.

- Use Stop Work Authority without fear of retaliation.
- Follow life-saving rules every time (tie-off, no working under a suspended load, no entering unprotected trenches, respect exclusion zones).

Safety Managers

- Focus audits and inspections on **SIF exposure**, not just PPE and paperwork.
- Track **leading indicators**: number of STCKY hazards identified and fixed, not only injury counts.
- Investigate near misses for **SIF potential**, even when no one was hurt.

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5. Key Takeaways for Your Site

1. **Name the STCKY's** on every project and every shift.
2. **Design them out or engineer them down** before work starts.
3. **Never trade schedule or convenience** for life-saving controls.
4. **Measure success by exposures reduced,** not just by recordable rates.

If we consistently seek out and control the **Stuff That Can Kill You**, we will prevent serious injuries and send everyone home – **every worker, every shift.**