KENTUCKY
AGC Self Insurers' Fund

# Dropped-Object Prevention: Tool Tethering, Exclusion Zones, and Overhead Work

Dropped objects are a major source of injuries and damage on job sites. Even small items falling from height can cause serious harm. Effective prevention relies on controlling hazards at the source, protecting workers below, and executing overhead work with discipline.

## Tool Tethering

Tool tethering prevents objects from falling by securing them to workers or structures with rated systems.

| **Key practices:** | **Typical items to tether:** |
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| • Use manufacturer-approved, weight-rated tethers<br>• Inspect tethers and anchor points before use<br>• Use tools with built-in attachment points when possible<br>• Keep tether length short to limit drop distance<br>• Never use improvised or non-rated attachments<br>• Train workers on proper use and limitations | • Hand tools and power tools<br>• Measuring and inspection devices<br>• Any equipment used at height that could fall |

## Exclusion Zones

Exclusion zones protect workers by restricting access beneath overhead work.

**Best practices:**

- Mark zones with barricades, cones, or tape
- Post clear overhead hazard signage
- Assign someone to monitor and enforce boundaries
- Adjust zone size based on height and conditions
- Coordinate with other crews to avoid exposure

## Overhead Work

Safe overhead work requires planning and control to prevent objects from dropping.

| **Planning:** | **Execution:** | **Worker focus:** |
|---|---|---|
| • Perform a task-specific hazard analysis<br>• Limit and secure materials at height<br>• Use containment (toe boards, netting) when feasible | • Keep work areas organized<br>• Secure tools and materials when not in use<br>• Avoid working above others when possible<br>• Stop work in unsafe conditions (e.g., high winds) | • Stay aware of overhead risks<br>• Follow procedures for handling tools and materials<br>• Report hazards or damaged equipment immediately |

## Summary

Use tethering to secure tools, exclusion zones to protect workers, and disciplined planning for overhead work. Applying these controls consistently reduces risk and strengthens job site safety.