SHARP START

March 20 — One Foot from Disaster

A worker positioned 30–40 feet above another worker dropped a 1 1/4” socket. It landed approximately one foot away from the worker below.

Hold onto your sockets, don’t drop tools

A 1 1/4-inch socket was dropped from 30 to 40 feet above another worker. It missed him by about a foot. That foot was luck.

If it can fall, it will.
Secure tools at height.
Barricade your work area.

A steel socket falling from that height accelerates quickly and carries significant force. From above, it may feel small in your hand. From below, it becomes a projectile. The worker underneath likely had no warning and no time to react. That’s when communication and barricades come into play.
Dropped-object incidents don’t require large tools or dramatic events. They require gravity and exposure. A momentary lapse in control an unsecured tool, an unstable grip, a shift in position is enough.

This wasn’t about not knowing tools can fall. It was about control at height and awareness below. And when gravity takes over, there is no negotiation.

Hazards

- Struck-by injury from falling object
- Head trauma or skull fracture
- Concussion
- Secondary fall due to impact
- Damage to equipment below
- Fatal injury potential

Stats

- Struck-by incidents are a leading cause of serious injury in construction and industrial work.
- Dropped objects from height significantly increase injury severity.
- Many falling-object injuries occur during routine tool use.
- Hard hats reduce risk but do not eliminate impact injury from heavy falling tools.

Humans at Work

When we work at height, our attention stays in front of us. On the bolt. On the flange. On the task in our hands. The space below fades into the background. That is task focus doing what it is designed to do. But it narrows awareness.

At the same time, distance changes perception. From 30 or 40 feet up, a tool feels small. A drop feels minor. But gravity does not scale based on how it feels from above. What looks harmless in your hand becomes dangerous on the way down.

The lesson is not just about one socket. It is about remembering that working at height creates risk in two directions. What is in your hand affects someone else’s head. If you are above, you own the space below.

Pause and Think

- What could fall from where you are working?
- Who is below you right now?
- Is the area controlled or are you assuming it is clear?