Spot The Safety Violation: Put a Lid on It!

It looks like these pieces of rebar are missing something. Do you know what it is’

Unguarded protruding steel reinforcing bars (‘rebar’) are very hazardous. Even if you simply stumble onto a piece of an unguarded rebar on the same level, you can impale yourself’resulting in serious injuries or death. And falls from heights onto uncapped rebar are even more likely to end badly.

The rebar in this picture from eLCOSH is completely exposed at the top. And the worker near it is in a precarious position, balancing on the edge of that opening without any apparent fall protection equipment. If he should start to waiver, he may have to choose between impalement on the rebar and a fall from who knows what height.

What can happen when a worker falls on naked rebar’

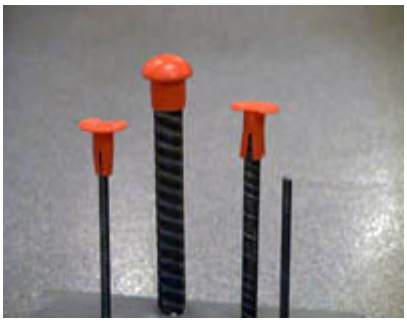
A construction worker in New Brunswick was covering a load on a truck with a tarp and stepped on the vehicle’s side rails to pull the tarp from the front to the rear of the truck. He then jumped backwards from the side rails, landing on a piece of uncapped ‘ inch rebar, which extended approximately four feet from the ground. It impaled the worker’penetrating approximately 10 inches’and chipped his tailbone.

So how do you protect workers from impalement on rebar’

If workers are working at any height above exposed rebar, they should use appropriate fall protection to protect themselves from impalement.

Guard all protruding ends of steel rebar with rebar caps or boards and similar devices. Note that not all rebar caps are the same. For example, mushroom caps only provide protection from scratches and other minor harm and so should *not* be used for impalement protection. So only caps designed to protect against impalement, such as plated caps or those with steel reinforcement, should be used.

Here’s an example of properly capped rebar:



An alternative is to bend the rebar so the exposed ends aren’t upright.