

Fall Protection

Additional Resources:

- [OSHA QuickCard™](#)
- [Complete OSHA Standard \(covers 1926.500, 501, 502, 503\)](#)

Employers are required to assess the workplace to determine if the walking/working surface on which employees are to work have the strength and structural integrity to safely support workers. Employees are not permitted to work on those surfaces until it has been determined that the surfaces have the requisite strength and structural integrity to support the workers. 1926.501(a)(2)

Where employees are exposed to falling 6' or more from an unprotected side or edge, the employer must select either a guardrail system, safety net system, or personal fall arrest system to protect the worker. 1926.501(b)(1)

Each employee in a hoist area shall be protected from falling 6' or more by guardrail systems or personal fall arrest systems. 1926.501(b)(3)

Personal fall arrest systems, covers, or guardrail systems must be erected around holes (including skylights) that are more than 6' above lower levels. 1926.501(b)(4)

Each employee using ramps, runways, and other walkways shall be protected from falling 6' or more by guardrail systems. 1926.501(b)(6)

Each employee at the edge of an excavation 6' deep or more shall be protected from falling by guardrail systems, fences, barricades, or covers when the excavations are not readily seen because of plant growth or other visual barrier. 1926.501(b)(7)

Where walkways are provided to permit employees to cross over excavations, guardrails are required on the walkway if it is 6' or more above the excavation. 1926.651(l)

Each employee performing overhand bricklaying and related work 6' or more above lower levels shall be protected by guardrail systems, safety net systems, or personal fall arrest systems, or shall work in a controlled access zone. 1926.501(b)(9)

All employees reaching more than 10" below the level of a walking/working surface on which they are working shall be protected by a guardrail system, safety net system, or personal fall arrest system. 1926.501(b)(9)(ii)

Each employee engaged in roofing activities on low-slope roofs with unprotected sides and edges 6' or more above lower levels shall be protected from falling by guardrail, safety net, or personal fall arrest systems or a combination of:

- Warning line system and guardrail system
- Warning line system and safety net system
- Warning line system and personal fall arrest system
- Warning line system and safety monitoring system

On low-slope roofs 50' or less in width, the use of a safety monitoring system without a warning line system is permitted. 1926.501(b)(10)

Each employee on a steep roof with unprotected sides and edges 6' or more above lower levels shall be protected by guardrail systems with toe boards, safety net systems, or personal fall arrest systems. 1926.501(b)(11)

Personal Fall Arrest Systems

A personal fall arrest system consists of anchorage, connectors, body harness, and may include a lanyard, deceleration device, lifeline, or a suitable combination of these. 1926.500(b)

Anchorage used for attachment of personal fall arrest equipment shall be independent of any anchorage being used to support or suspend platforms and capable of supporting at least 5,000 pounds per employee attached, or shall be designed, installed, and used as follows:

As part of a complete personal fall arrest system which maintains a safety factor of at least two

Under the supervision of a qualified person. 1926.502(d)(15)

The employer shall provide for prompt rescue of employees in the event of a fall or shall assure that employees are able to rescue themselves. 1926.502(d)(20)

Guardrail Systems

Top edge height of top rails or equivalent guardrail system members shall have a vertical height of approximately 42", plus or minus 3" above the walking/working level. 1926.502(b)(1)

Midrails, screens, mesh, etc. (i.e. intermediate members) shall be installed midway between the top edge and the walking/working surface when there is no other member at least 21" high. 1926.502(b)(2)

Guardrail systems shall be surfaced so as to prevent injury to an employee, with a strength to withstand a force of at least 200 pounds, applied in any outward or downward direction at any point along the top edge. 1926.502(b)(3) and (6)

If guardrail systems (or chain gate or guardrail) or portions thereof must be removed to facilitate hoisting operations, as during the landing of materials, and a worker must lean through the access opening or out over the edge of the access opening to receive or guide equipment and materials, that employee must be protected by a personal fall arrest system. 1926.501(b)(3)

Covers

Covers for holes in floors, roofs, and other walking/working surfaces shall be capable of supporting, without failure, at least twice the weight of employees, equipment, and materials that may be imposed on the cover at any one time, shall be secured when installed so as to prevent accidental displacement by the wind, equipment, or employees, and shall be color coded or they shall be marked with the word "HOLE" or "COVER" to provide warning of the hazard. 1926.502(i)(1) through (4)