

**§ 1926.501 Duty to have fall protection.**

(a) *General.* (1) This section sets forth requirements for employers to provide fall protection systems. All fall protection required by this section shall conform to the criteria set forth in § 1926.502 of this subpart.

(2) The employer shall determine if the walking/working surfaces on which its employees are to work have the strength and structural integrity to support employees safely. Employees shall be allowed to work on those surfaces only when the surfaces have the requisite strength and structural integrity.

(b)(1) *Unprotected sides and edges.* Each employee on a walking/working surface (horizontal and vertical surface) with an unprotected side or edge which is 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above a lower level shall be protected from falling by the use of guardrail systems, safety net systems, or personal fall arrest systems.

(2) *Leading edges.* (i) Each employee who is constructing a leading edge 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above lower levels shall be protected from falling by guardrail systems, safety net systems, or personal fall arrest systems. Exception: When the employer can demonstrate that it is infeasible or creates a greater hazard to use these systems, the employer shall develop and implement a fall protection plan which meets the requirements of paragraph (k) of § 1926.502.

NOTE: There is a presumption that it is feasible and will not create a greater hazard to implement at least one of the above-listed fall protection systems. Accordingly, the employer has the burden of establishing that it is appropriate to implement a fall protection plan which complies with § 1926.502(k) for a particular workplace situation, in lieu of implementing any of those systems.

(ii) Each employee on a walking/working surface 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above a lower level where leading edges are under construction, but who is not engaged in the leading edge work, shall be protected from falling by a guardrail system, safety net system, or personal fall arrest system. If a guardrail system is chosen to provide the fall protection, and a controlled access zone has already been established for leading edge work, the control line may be used in lieu of a guardrail along

the edge that parallels the leading edge.

(3) *Hoist areas.* Each employee in a hoist area shall be protected from falling 6 feet (1.8 m) or more to lower levels by guardrail systems or personal fall arrest systems. If guardrail systems, [or chain, gate, or guardrail] or portions thereof, are removed to facilitate the hoisting operation (e.g., during landing of materials), and an employee must lean through the access opening or out over the edge of the access opening (to receive or guide equipment and materials, for example), that employee shall be protected from fall hazards by a personal fall arrest system.

(4) *Holes.* (i) Each employee on walking/working surfaces shall be protected from falling through holes (including skylights) more than 6 feet (1.8 m) above lower levels, by personal fall arrest systems, covers, or guardrail systems erected around such holes.

(ii) Each employee on a walking/working surface shall be protected from tripping in or stepping into or through holes (including skylights) by covers.

(iii) Each employee on a walking/working surface shall be protected from objects falling through holes (including skylights) by covers.

(5) *Formwork and reinforcing steel.* Each employee on the face of formwork or reinforcing steel shall be protected from falling 6 feet (1.8 m) or more to lower levels by personal fall arrest systems, safety net systems, or positioning device systems.

(6) *Ramps, runways, and other walkways.* Each employee on ramps, runways, and other walkways shall be protected from falling 6 feet (1.8 m) or more to lower levels by guardrail systems.

(7) *Excavations.* (i) Each employee at the edge of an excavation 6 feet (1.8 m) or more in depth shall be protected from falling by guardrail systems, fences, or barricades when the excavations are not readily seen because of plant growth or other visual barrier;

(ii) Each employee at the edge of a well, pit, shaft, and similar excavation 6 feet (1.8 m) or more in depth shall be protected from falling by guardrail systems, fences, barricades, or covers.

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(8) *Dangerous equipment.* (i) Each employee less than 6 feet (1.8 m) above dangerous equipment shall be protected from falling into or onto the dangerous equipment by guardrail systems or by equipment guards.

(ii) Each employee 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above dangerous equipment shall be protected from fall hazards by guardrail systems, personal fall arrest systems, or safety net systems.

(9) *Overhand bricklaying and related work.* (i) Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (b) of this section, each employee performing overhand bricklaying and related work 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above lower levels, shall be protected from falling by guardrail systems, safety net systems, personal fall arrest systems, or shall work in a controlled access zone.

(ii) Each employee reaching more than 10 inches (25 cm) below the level of the walking/working surface on which they are working, shall be protected from falling by a guardrail system, safety net system, or personal fall arrest system.

NOTE: Bricklaying operations performed on scaffolds are regulated by subpart L—Scaffolds of this part.

(10) *Roofing work on Low-slope roofs.* Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (b) of this section, each employee engaged in roofing activities on low-slope roofs, with unprotected sides and edges 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above lower levels shall be protected from falling by guardrail systems, safety net systems, personal fall arrest systems, or a combination of warning line system and guardrail system, warning line system and safety net system, or warning line system and personal fall arrest system, or warning line system and safety monitoring system. Or, on roofs 50-feet (15.25 m) or less in width (see appendix A to subpart M of this part), the use of a safety monitoring system alone [i.e. without the warning line system] is permitted.

(11) *Steep roofs.* Each employee on a steep roof with unprotected sides and edges 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above lower levels shall be protected from falling by guardrail systems with toeboards, safety net systems, or personal fall arrest systems.

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(12) *Precast concrete erection.* Each employee engaged in the erection of precast concrete members (including, but not limited to the erection of wall panels, columns, beams, and floor and roof “tees”) and related operations such as grouting of precast concrete members, who is 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above lower levels shall be protected from falling by guardrail systems, safety net systems, or personal fall arrest systems, unless another provision in paragraph (b) of this section provides for an alternative fall protection measure. Exception: When the employer can demonstrate that it is infeasible or creates a greater hazard to use these systems, the employer shall develop and implement a fall protection plan which meets the requirements of paragraph (k) of § 1926.502.

NOTE: There is a presumption that it is feasible and will not create a greater hazard to implement at least one of the above-listed fall protection systems. Accordingly, the employer has the burden of establishing that it is appropriate to implement a fall protection plan which complies with § 1926.502(k) for a particular workplace situation, in lieu of implementing any of those systems.

(13) *Residential construction.* Each employee engaged in residential construction activities 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above lower levels shall be protected by guardrail systems, safety net system, or personal fall arrest system unless another provision in paragraph (b) of this section provides for an alternative fall protection measure. Exception: When the employer can demonstrate that it is infeasible or creates a greater hazard to use these systems, the employer shall develop and implement a fall protection plan which meets the requirements of paragraph (k) of § 1926.502.

NOTE: There is a presumption that it is feasible and will not create a greater hazard to implement at least one of the above-listed fall protection systems. Accordingly, the employer has the burden of establishing that it is appropriate to implement a fall protection plan which complies with § 1926.502(k) for a particular workplace situation, in lieu of implementing any of those systems.

(14) *Wall openings.* Each employee working on, at, above, or near wall openings (including those with chutes attached) where the outside bottom edge of the wall opening is 6 feet (1.8 m)

or more above lower levels and the inside bottom edge of the wall opening is less than 39 inches (1.0 m) above the walking/working surface, shall be protected from falling by the use of a guardrail system, a safety net system, or a personal fall arrest system.

(15) *Walking/working surfaces not otherwise addressed.* Except as provided in § 1926.500(a)(2) or in § 1926.501 (b)(1) through (b)(14), each employee on a walking/working surface 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above lower levels shall be protected from falling by a guardrail system, safety net system, or personal fall arrest system.

(c) *Protection from falling objects.* When an employee is exposed to falling objects, the employer shall have each employee wear a hard hat and shall implement one of the following measures:

(1) Erect toeboards, screens, or guardrail systems to prevent objects from falling from higher levels; or,

(2) Erect a canopy structure and keep potential fall objects far enough from the edge of the higher level so that those objects would not go over the edge if they were accidentally displaced; or,

(3) Barricade the area to which objects could fall, prohibit employees from entering the barricaded area, and keep objects that may fall far enough away from the edge of a higher level so that those objects would not go over the edge if they were accidentally displaced.

#### **§ 1926.502 Fall protection systems criteria and practices.**

(a) *General.* (1) Fall protection systems required by this part shall comply with the applicable provisions of this section.

(2) Employers shall provide and install all fall protection systems required by this subpart for an employee, and shall comply with all other pertinent requirements of this subpart before that employee begins the work that necessitates the fall protection.

(b) *Guardrail systems.* Guardrail systems and their use shall comply with the following provisions:

(1) Top edge height of top rails, or equivalent guardrail system members, shall be 42 inches (1.1 m) plus or minus 3 inches (8 cm) above the walking/

working level. When conditions warrant, the height of the top edge may exceed the 45-inch height, provided the guardrail system meets all other criteria of this paragraph.

NOTE: When employees are using stilts, the top edge height of the top rail, or equivalent member, shall be increased an amount equal to the height of the stilts.

(2) Midrails, screens, mesh, intermediate vertical members, or equivalent intermediate structural members shall be installed between the top edge of the guardrail system and the walking/working surface when there is no wall or parapet wall at least 21 inches (53 cm) high.

(i) Midrails, when used, shall be installed at a height midway between the top edge of the guardrail system and the walking/working level.

(ii) Screens and mesh, when used, shall extend from the top rail to the walking/working level and along the entire opening between top rail supports.

(iii) Intermediate members (such as balusters), when used between posts, shall be not more than 19 inches (48 cm) apart.

(iv) Other structural members (such as additional midrails and architectural panels) shall be installed such that there are no openings in the guardrail system that are more than 19 inches (.5 m) wide.

(3) Guardrail systems shall be capable of withstanding, without failure, a force of at least 200 pounds (890 N) applied within 2 inches (5.1 cm) of the top edge, in any outward or downward direction, at any point along the top edge.

(4) When the 200 pound (890 N) test load specified in paragraph (b)(3) of this section is applied in a downward direction, the top edge of the guardrail shall not deflect to a height less than 39 inches (1.0 m) above the walking/working level. Guardrail system components selected and constructed in accordance with the appendix B to subpart M of this part will be deemed to meet this requirement.

(5) Midrails, screens, mesh, intermediate vertical members, solid panels, and equivalent structural members shall be capable of withstanding, without failure, a force of at least 150 pounds (666 N) applied in any downward