

Safe Fall Protection Safety for Construction

Due to the nature of construction work, employees are often required to work in areas that have no pre-existing controls to prevent workers from falling from the work surface. To better protect workers in these circumstances, OSHA has developed regulations which can be found in 29 CFR 1926 Subpart M. Just as there are many types of construction and several surfaces from which employees can fall, OSHA has created several standard and alternative methods of fall protection which can be utilized depending on the potential fall hazards.

Standard Fall Protection

There are three types of fall protection identified as standard methods. These standard methods can be used under any circumstances where fall protection is required and the method can be properly installed and utilized.

Guardrail — A barrier erected to prevent employees from falling to lower levels. Guardrails consist of a top rail 39-45" above the walking working surface, a mid-rail 21" above the walking working surface, and a toe board. Posts must be no more than 8' apart to provide guardrails with strength up to 200 pounds.



Safety Net — Installed as close as practicable under the walking/working surface on which employees are working, but in no case more than 30 feet (9.1 m) below such level. When nets are used on bridges, the potential fall area from the walking/working surface to the net shall be unobstructed.

Personal Fall Arrest System — Consists of an anchor point which can withstand a downward force of 5,000 pounds, a lanyard and a full body harness. The lanyard and body harness must be rated for at least 300 pounds.



Alternative Methods of Fall Protection

- **Horizontal Lifelines:** an extension of an anchorage system, allowing an employee to move \ back and forth across a work area. A sliding fitting connects to the line and a lanyard connects the worker's harness to that fitting.
- **Vertical Lifelines:** an extension of an anchorage system, allowing an employee to move up and down across a work area. A rope grab connects to the line and a lanyard connects the worker's harness to that sliding fitting.
- **Warning Line System:** can only be used on a low sloped roof in limited conditions. Must be installed at least 6' from an unprotected edge. Requires a safety monitor be utilized to ensure employees do not cross over the warning line.
- **Controlled Access Zone:** the area between the warning line and the unprotected edge. Must have a written safety plan and a safety monitor. Can only be used if a standard method of fall protection can not be used.
- **Safety Monitor:** an employee assigned the responsibility for observing employees exposed to unprotected fall hazards utilizing alternate methods of fall protection. Safety Monitor duties may only be assigned to a competent person.