

Fall Protection

Use fall protection anytime you are working on an unprotected or elevated work surface from which you could fall. Fall protection is required when working 4 to 6 feet above the ground. Ask your manager or supervisor for guidance about using fall protection on your worksite.

Common Fall Hazards

Common fall hazards include:

- Floor holes
- Open-sided floors
- Roof edges
- Skylights
- Ladders
- Mobile elevated work platforms such as scissor lifts and aerial lifts

Mistakes that may cause a fall include:

- Not respecting fall hazards
- Not paying attention
- Equipment/tool failure
- Slips
- Overreaching
- Complacency

Methods of Fall Protection

Use fall protection when:

- Guardrails are removed
- Guardrails/covers are not able to be installed
- You are working hands-free

Primary fall protection includes footing, balance, handholds, stable work surfaces, and positioning equipment.

Secondary fall protection is classified as active or passive:

- **Passive** systems include guardrails, covers and safety nets
- **Active** systems include:
 - **Work positioning:** Allows you to work hands-free
 - **Fall restraint:** Prevents you from falling off an edge or into an opening
 - **Fall arrest:** Catches your body after you have fallen

When planning to use personal fall protection, consider free fall, clearance and swing fall:

- **Free fall** is the distance traveled from the point where you start falling to the point where your fall protection system begins to slow you down
- **Clearance** is the distance required for your personal fall arrest equipment to activate, decelerate and then completely stop your fall
- **Swing fall** can occur when you walk away from under your anchor point. When you fall, you will swing back under your anchor point like a pendulum

Fall Protection Equipment

Personal fall protection includes the following components:

- **Body support** includes a full body harness
- **Connectors** may be lanyards, snaphooks or carabiners
- **Anchor points** are the points at which you attach your anchorage connector
 - Use anchor points that are as high as possible and located at least at D-ring level
 - Anchor to a structure that can handle a 5,000-pound load or that a qualified person has identified for you

- Make sure you have enough clearance for your fall protection system to stop you before your body strikes an object below
- **Self-Retracting Lifelines (SRLs)** require much less clearance than a lanyard and allow more freedom of movement
- **Vertical** and **horizontal lifelines** are also used on some worksites

Inspecting and Maintaining Equipment

You must inspect fall protection equipment before every use

- Inspect body support more frequently when welding or working with chemicals or sharp edges
- Inspect connectors periodically throughout the day

A qualified person must also inspect equipment annually.

If equipment is ever involved in a fall, even if it does not show signs of damage, remove it from use and return it to your supervisor.

To keep your fall protection equipment working, you must:

- Store equipment properly
- Never throw it into a storage box
- Keep it dry and clean
- Keep it out of direct sunlight