



Fall Prevention

eSafetyLine

The 6' Rule

OSHA's "6 foot rule" for fall protection is pretty straightforward. It states that if any employee is in a situation where they may lose balance and fall to a lower level or simply fall 6 feet or more, fall protection must be provided and used. If it is so simple, then why is fall protection consistently included in OSHA's top ten most frequently cited violations? There are multiple reasons. For one, unfortunately, contractors often believe it is easier, faster and cheaper not to comply. A second reason may be a misinterpretation of the standards related to fall protection.

We've all had experience reading OSHA's standards with varying degrees of success in understanding what is actually required at a worksite. The bottom line best way to keep employees safe is to have some type of fall protection whenever work is done at a height of 6 feet or more unless working on scaffolding. It is important to realize that there are many types of fall protection that can be used and the work being done may determine the type that will be used. This can be a guardrail, safety net or personal fall arrest system. This is where the confusion shows itself. For example; is it necessary to use fall protection when on a portable ladder? According to OSHA when just using a portable ladder, no, fall protection isn't needed. However, if the ladder is on a platform that is over 6 feet in height then fall protection is needed, not for the ladder but for the platform.

There are some situations where OSHA allows for fall protection that doesn't include a guardrail, safety net or personal fall arrest system. Roof work on low slope roofs and residential construction are two examples. Although OSHA doesn't require "conventional" fall protection, fall protection must be used in the form of a warning line that is placed at least 6 feet from the roof edge (1926.501(b)(10) of Subpart M). Any other trades on the roof are required to have personal fall protection or have a warning line placed at least 15 feet from the roof edge.

Working on scaffolds and aerial lifts almost always involves employees at heights over 6 feet. However, those employees on these devices aren't required to use standard fall protection. This is because both scaffolds and lifts are required to have guardrail systems to prevent the worker from falling. If the device's railing system doesn't meet OSHA's requirements then a personal fall protection system would be necessary.

Although OSHA's 6 foot rule for fall protection is fairly cut and dry, there are exceptions to the rule. The most important thing to keep in mind when determining the need for fall protection is the safety of

the employees. There may not be a need for fall protection according to OSHA, but if all protection can keep the employees safer, it's always a good choice.

Discussion Questions

When is fall protection required by OSHA?

What situations allow for different types of fall protection?

MEETING / TRAINING ATTENDANCE ROSTER

COMPANY: _____

_____ SAFETY MEETING

JOB/DEPT: _____

_____ SAFETY TRAINING

DATE: ___/___/_____

TIME: _____

TOPICS ADDRESSED: _____

EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURES

| | | |
|-------|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
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EMPLOYEE SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: _____

ACTION TAKEN: _____

Supervisor's Signature

_____/_____/_____
Date

Safety Coordinator's Signature

_____/_____/_____
Date