

New Regulations on Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls

April 2017

Falls from heights and on the same level (a working surface) are among the leading causes of serious work-related injuries and deaths. Slips, trips and falls are THE leading causes of injuries among school employees. They are also the most costly.

On November 17, 2016, OSHA issued a final rule that updated the Walking-Working Surfaces standards specific to slip, trip, and fall hazards. The rule becomes effective on Jan. 17, 2017 and will affect approximately 112 million workers at seven million worksites including our schools. OSHA estimates that 202,066 serious lost-workday injuries and 345 fatalities occur annually among workers directly affected by this final standard. What do the new rules require and how does this affect our schools? (<https://www.osha.gov/walking-working-surfaces/RegTextWWSFinalRule.pdf>).

Specifically, we need to address:

- 1) Maintaining walking surfaces, stairways, etc. in good condition (cleaned, maintained, inspected, housekeeping);
- 2) Identifying fall hazards from unprotected edges, floor holes, etc., and installing perimeter protection;
- 3) Training, inspecting, and maintaining ladders;
- 4) Training, inspecting, and proper construction of scaffolding;
- 5) Roofing work safety, including the use of body harnesses and lanyards, anchor points, and rescue procedures.



1 Position the ladder properly

Fully open the stepladder on a level surface and lock its spreaders in place.

Never use a stepladder folded up and leaning against a surface.

2 Use a ladder that is long enough

Never climb on the top two steps of a stepladder.

Never place the stepladder on boxes or unstable bases to gain extra height.



3 Climb and use the ladder carefully

Maintain 3-point contact with the ladder while climbing (such as 1 hand and 2 feet).

Brace yourself with your free hand, if possible.

Always face the stepladder treads while using a stepladder.

Never overreach or lean to one side while using a stepladder.

Never carry heavy, bulky, or other objects that may make going up or down a ladder unsafe.

There are also new training requirements. Within six months of the final rule, (January 17) staff must be trained how to correctly identify and minimize fall hazards; how to use Personal Fall Arrest Systems (PFAS);

and maintain, inspect, and store equipment or systems used for fall protection. Affected personnel may include maintenance, custodial, information technology and some instructional staff personnel.

In two years, all new fixed ladders in excess of 24 feet will be required to have PFAS (attachment points along ladder for tie off). Within two years existing ladders must have a cage, well, ladder safety system or PFAS. Within twenty years, all ladders over 24 feet must have PFAS. Specific requirements for portable ladders and stepladders are now detailed (construction, maintenance, inspection, etc.).

The new rule allows for the elimination of existing mandates to use guardrails as a primary fall protection method and lets employers choose PFAS (body harness, lanyard, etc.) where better suited. Outdated scaffold standards now match construction scaffold standards. Is scaffolding used by our maintenance personnel or in theater productions?



PLAN ahead to get the job done safely

When working from heights is required (ladders, scaffolds, and roofs), plan projects to ensure that the job is done safely. For example, during roofing repairs, think about all of the different fall hazards, such as holes, skylights and leading edges, then plan and select fall protection suitable to that work, such as PFAS.

PROVIDE the right equipment

Provide the right kind of equipment for the job, including ladders, scaffolds or PFAS when staff is working 4 feet or more above lower levels. Ensure body harnesses fit properly, are inspected, and tie off anchor points are identified and properly installed.

TRAIN everyone to use the equipment safely

Employers are now required to train workers in hazard recognition and the care and safe use of equipment such as ladders, scaffolds, and fall protection systems.

Resources

- 1) OSHA Fall Protection publications, including fall prevention fact sheets, fall prevention posters, fall protection wallet cards and a fall prevention training guide (A Lesson Plan for Employers).
<https://www.osha.gov/pls/publications/publication.AthruZ?pType=AthruZ#F>
- 2) Personal Fall Arrest System (PFAS) PowerPoint presentation
https://www.osha.gov/dte/grant_materials/fy10/sh-20836-10/Fall_Prevention_Protection.pptx
- 3) Fall Prevention Worker Training Instructor Workbook
https://www.osha.gov/dte/grant_materials/fy15/SH-27625-SH5/FallPreventionWorkerInstructorWorkbook.pdf