

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH DIVISION  
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

Standards Notice - 42

TO: All OSHA Consultants, Supervisors, Safety Officers, Industrial Hygienists and Staff

SUBJECT: Fall Protection

**I. General Industry**

**A. Standards (quoted in part for application to fall hazards only)**

1. 29 CFR 1910.23(c)(1) Every open-sided floor or platform 4 feet or more above adjacent floor or ground level shall be guarded by a standard railing (or the equivalent as specified in paragraph (e)(3) of this section) on all open sides except where there is an entrance to a ramp, stairway, or fixed ladder.
2. 29 CFR 1910.23(c)(3) Regardless of height, open-sided floors, walkways, platforms, or runways above or adjacent to dangerous equipment, pickling, or galvanizing tanks, degreasing units, and similar hazards shall be guarded with a standard railing and toeboard.
3. 29 CFR 1910.28(a) General requirements for all scaffolds. (3) Guardrails and toeboards shall be installed on all open sides and ends of platforms more than 10 feet above the ground or floor.
4. 29 CFR 1910.132(a) Application. Protective equipment including personal protective equipment...protective shields and barriers, shall be provided, used, and maintained in a sanitary condition wherever it is necessary by reason of hazards of processes or environment...encountered in a manner capable of causing injury or impairment in the function of any part of the body through physical contact.
5. Many other specific standards are present in 29 CFR 1910 covering particular equipment, operations, or applications for fall protection measures: they are too numerous and varied to be listed or address individually in this Standards Notice.

**B. Discussion**

This Standards Notice is intended to reduce the confusion and uncertainty involved in identifying and citing fall hazards and adequate fall protection in General Industry. There are many standards on guardrails, personal protective equipment, and other safety devices for general application, as well as specific situations such as powered platforms, telecommunications, and others.

**C. Interpretation**

In general, any operation or situation in which an employee is or may be exposed to a potential fall of 4 feet or more requires some form of protection, unless otherwise specified in the Standards, such as scaffold platforms. Protection against falling must be provided in any situation where an employee may fall on or into dangerous equipment or operations, regardless of height.

Proper guarding normally consists of a standard railing (top rail, midrail, and toeboard (where required)) or equivalent, or safety belt and properly secured lifeline. Special hazards may require additional protection, such as screens or solid barriers.

In making an inspection where fall hazards are present, the first step is to determine whether the protection, if any, is adequate to prevent an accident associated with the fall hazard. In

recommending a citation, the Safety Officer must determine if a special fall protection standard is involved or whether the general guidelines apply.

D. Construction

1. Standards

1. 29 CFR 1926.28(a) The employer is responsible for requiring the wearing of appropriate personal protective equipment in all operations where there is an exposure to hazardous conditions or where this part indicates the need for using such equipment to reduce the hazards to the employees.
2. 29 CFR 1926.104(a) Lifelines, safety belts, and lanyards shall be used only for employee safeguarding...
3. 29 CFR 1926.105(a) Safety nets shall be provided when workplaces are more than 25 feet above the ground or water surface or other surfaces where the use of ladders, scaffolds, catch platforms, temporary floors, safety lines, or safety belts is impractical.
4. 29 CFR 1926.451(a)(4) Guardrails and toeboards shall be installed on all open sides and ends of platforms more than 10 feet above the ground or floor... Scaffolds 4 feet to 10 feet in height, having a minimum horizontal dimension in either direction of less than 45 inches, shall have standard guardrails installed on all open sides and ends of the platform.
5. 29 CFR 1926.500(d)(1) Every open-sided floor or platform 6 feet or more above adjacent floor or ground level shall be guarded by a standard railing, or the equivalent, as specified in paragraph (f)(1)(i) of this section, on all open sides, except where there is an entrance to a ramp, stairway, or fixed ladder.

2. Discussion

As in the General Industry section above, this Standards Notice is intended to reduce the misunderstanding and enforcement problems associated with fall protection requirements in the Construction Industry. Again, there are many Standards for handling most operations

3. Interpretation

The general guidelines in construction for fall protection are 1926.28(a) requiring protection in any situation where the hazard of falling is reduced by personal protective equipment; 1926.451(a)(4) requiring protection on scaffold platforms more than 10 feet above the adjacent surface or less for scaffolds less than 45 inches in minimum horizontal dimension; and 1926.500(d)(1) requiring protection on any open-sided floor or platform 6 feet or more above adjacent surfaces. Where fall hazards related to special conditions such as floor or wall openings, fixed ladders, powered platforms, etc. are encountered, then the Standards applicable to those hazards shall be applied. In all other construction situations, the general guideline standards listed above may be used.

For fall protection requirements related to steel erection operations see the latest revision of Standards Notice 12, March 21, 1977.

For citation guidelines for flat roof operations, see Standards Notice 23, July 15, 1976, and for sloped roof work, see Standards Notice 14, October 3, 1974.

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Filing Date: May 4, 1977  
Number: 7D.0606