



FALL PROTECTION

TOOLBOX TALK: Fall Protection & OSHA 1910 vs. 1926 Requirements

RATTLIR Safety Series – “Strike Before It Bites”

Purpose

Working at height is one of the leading causes of workplace injuries and fatalities. Fall protection is critical whenever employees are working at elevated levels. This toolbox talk explains key fall hazards, fall protection requirements, and the differences between OSHA 1910 (General Industry) and OSHA 1926 (Construction) regulations.



OSHA Fall Protection Requirements: 1910 vs. 1926

Understanding the difference between OSHA standards ensures workers are properly protected depending on the task:

- OSHA 1910 (General Industry): Fall protection is required at 4 feet or higher.
- OSHA 1926 (Construction): Fall protection is required at 6 feet or higher.



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General Industry typically covers maintenance, facility work, and routine operations. Construction activities such as building, demolition, steel erection, or renovation fall under OSHA 1926.

When in doubt, default to the more stringent requirement or consult safety leadership.

Common Fall Hazards

- Unprotected edges, platforms, roofs, or mezzanines.
- Open floor holes or skylights.
- Ladders used improperly or in poor condition.
- Scaffolds that are incomplete or missing guardrails.
- Slippery, unstable, or cluttered walking-working surfaces.
- Inadequate fall clearance when using personal fall arrest systems.

Fall Protection Methods

- Guardrails – A preferred method when feasible; prevents reaching the hazard.
- Fall Restraint – Restricts movement so workers cannot reach the fall hazard.
- Fall Arrest – Stops a fall in progress; requires a full-body harness and anchor point.
- Safety Nets – Used when other options are not practical.
- Ladders – Ensure proper angle (4:1 ratio), secure footing, and maintain three-point contact.
- Scaffolds – Must be inspected daily, properly planked, and equipped with guardrails.

Anchorage Requirements

- Anchor points for fall arrest must support 5,000 lbs per worker, or be designed by a qualified person.
- Always clip to overhead anchor points to reduce free-fall distance.
- Never tie off to guardrails, scaffolding frames, or non-rated structural members.
- Inspect anchor points and connectors before each use.

Emergency Response

- If a fall occurs, call emergency services immediately.
- Do not attempt to move the fallen worker unless there is immediate danger.
- Use a pre-planned rescue procedure—suspension trauma can occur within minutes.
- Ensure the area is secured to prevent secondary incidents.
- Report the incident, preserve evidence, and conduct a root-cause analysis.



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Discussion Questions

- Are we performing General Industry or Construction work today?
- Do we have proper anchorage, harnesses, and fall arrest equipment on-site?
- What fall hazards exist in our work area right now?

RATTLIR Takeaway

Falls are one of the most serious and preventable workplace hazards. Understanding when fall protection is required, and using it correctly, ensures we strike before it bites and send every worker home safe.