



WORKING FROM HEIGHTS

TOOLBOX TALK: Working From Heights (OSHA 1910 & 1926)

RATTLIR Safety Series – "Strike Before It Bites"

Purpose

Working from heights remains one of OSHA's most frequently cited hazards. Falls are a leading cause of serious injury and fatality in both construction (OSHA 29 CFR 1926) and general industry (OSHA 29 CFR 1910). This toolbox talk explains height requirements, fall protection systems, and safe practices to prevent incidents in industrial and power-generation environments.

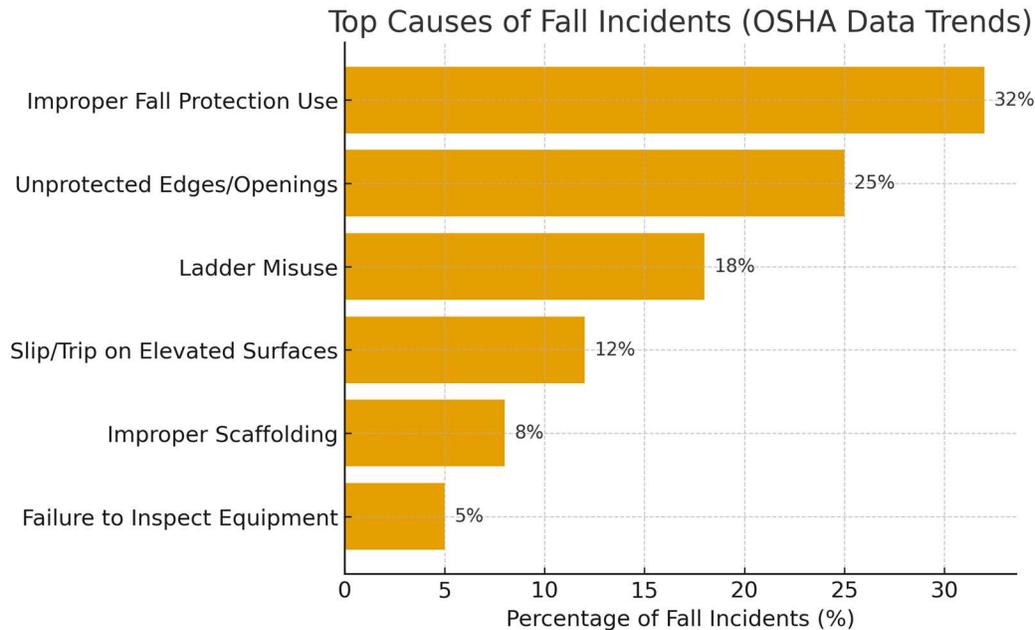


Figure 1 – Top Causes of Fall Incidents

OSHA Height Requirements (General Industry & Construction)

OSHA establishes mandatory thresholds for fall protection depending on the work environment and activity performed:

- General Industry (29 CFR 1910.28): Fall protection required at 4 feet.
- Construction (29 CFR 1926.501): Fall protection required at 6 feet.
- Scaffolding (29 CFR 1926.451): Guardrails or PFAS required at 10 feet.



WORKING FROM HEIGHTS

- Fixed Ladders (29 CFR 1910.23): Fall protection required above 24 feet.
- Work over dangerous equipment requires fall protection regardless of height.

Common Height Hazards in Industrial and Power-Plant Settings

Working from heights in power-generation facilities exposes workers to multiple elevated hazards:

- Open edges on turbine decks, HRSG modules, and boiler structures.
- Temporary platforms, scaffold decks, and grating with removable sections.
- Ladder transitions, mezzanines, and catwalks with limited railings.
- Outdoor structures exposed to wind, rain, or poor lighting.

Fall Protection Systems

Fall protection systems must be selected, fitted, and used correctly to prevent falls or minimize injury if a fall occurs:

- Guardrails: The preferred method for eliminating fall hazards.
- Personal Fall Arrest System (PFAS): Requires full-body harness, lanyard or SRL, and approved anchor point.
- Fall Restraint: Prevents the worker from reaching an edge where a fall can occur.
- Safety Nets: May be used when other forms of fall protection are not feasible.

Fall Protection Equipment Inspection

Fall protection equipment must be inspected before each use to ensure components are safe and free of defects:

- Inspect harness webbing for cuts, frays, burns, or chemical damage.
- Check D-rings and hardware for cracks, deformation, or corrosion.
- Ensure lanyards and SRLs are not twisted, damaged, or beyond service life.
- Verify anchor points are approved and support required load ratings.

Safe Work Practices While Working From Heights

Safe work practices help workers maintain control and reduce the likelihood of fall-related incidents:

- Maintain three points of contact when climbing ladders or structures.
- Use 100% tie-off when required—never disconnect unless anchored elsewhere.
- Keep work platforms free of tools, debris, ice, and trip hazards.
- Never override, remove, or modify guardrails.



WORKING FROM HEIGHTS

Fall Clearance Planning

Fall arrest systems require adequate clearance below the worker to avoid striking a lower level:

- Account for lanyard length, deceleration distance, D-ring position, and worker height.
- Understand swing fall hazards when anchored horizontally away from work position.
- Evaluate clearance during pre-job planning and incorporate into the JHA.

Discussion Questions

- Do you understand OSHA's fall protection height requirements for today's task?
- Are your harness, lanyard, and anchor point properly inspected and approved?
- Do you have a clear fall protection plan and rescue strategy before working at heights?

RATTLIR Takeaway

Working at heights demands discipline, preparation, and respect for OSHA's fall protection standards. By understanding hazard zones, ensuring proper equipment use, and planning for fall clearance, workers prevent incidents before they occur. RATTLIR strikes before it bites by promoting proactive height safety, rigorous inspection practices, and strong situational awareness.