



Minnesota Electrical Association

Electrical

Toolbox Talks

Fall Protection

29 CFR 1926 Subpart M (Construction)
29 CFR 1910 Subpart D and Subpart I (General Industry)

Each employee on a walking/working surface with an unprotected side or edge 6 ft or more above a lower level shall be protected from falling by the use of a guardrail system, safety net system or personal fall arrest system (PFAS) in construction areas. For general industry, the distance requirement is 4 ft.

In general requirements, all places of employment, passageways, storerooms, service rooms, and walking-working surfaces are kept in a clean, dry (to the extent possible), orderly, and sanitary condition.

Employees on Walking or Working Surfaces Shall be Protected from:

- Falling through holes (including skylights) more than 6 ft (for construction) or 4 ft (for general industry) above lower levels by PFAS, covers, or guardrail systems erected around such holes.
- Tripping or stepping into or through holes (including skylights) by covers or guard rails.
- Objects falling through holes (including skylights) by covers.

Stairways:

Open sides of stairs with 4 or more risers must be provided with a standard stair railing on each open side. The height of the top rail shall be at least 36" above the stair tread, in-line with the face of the riser, at the forward edge of the stair tread. Stairways with both sides enclosed must have a hand rail 30-37" above the stair tread, in-line with the face of the riser, at the forward edge of the tread.

Excavations during Construction:

- Each employee at the edge of an excavation 6 ft or more in depth shall be protected from falling by the use of guardrail systems, fences, or barricades when the excavations are not readily seen because of plant growth or other visual barriers.
- Use of a warning system, such as barricade, stop log, or signals, must be used when mobile equipment is operated near or approaching the edge of an excavation and the operator does not have clear view of the edge.
- Walkways constructed to traverse across an excavation 6 ft or more in depth, must be provided with a standard guard railing on each open side.
- Each employee at the edge of a well, pit, shaft or similar excavation 6 ft or more in depth shall be protected from falling by a guardrail system, fence, barricade or cover.

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Fall Protection

(continued)

Working Above Dangerous Equipment:

- Similar to the above requirements for “Employees on Walking or Working Surfaces,” employees working above dangerous equipment shall be protected from falling into equipment. Guard rails, travel restraint or other appropriate fall protection method can be used.
- See “ladder safety” for separate fall protection requirements

Roofing Operations (Construction):

Employees on steep roofs (more than 4/12 pitch) with unprotected sides and edges 6 ft or more above lower levels shall be protected from falling by a guardrail system with toeboards, safety nets or PFAS. Low-slope roofs (up to 4/12 pitch) can use the same as above in combination with a warning line system or a warning line system and safety monitor.

Roofing Operations (General Industry):

Working on roof tops for installation or repair of equipment are part of 29 CFR 1910.22 and .28. The employer must ensure that the employee has safe access and egress to and from the working surfaces. Any ladders used to gain access must meet the requirements for ladder safety.

Wall Openings:

If working at or near a (wall) opening where the inside bottom edge is less than 39 inches above the walking/working surface and the outside bottom edge exceeds the specified height criteria, it shall be protected from falling by the use of a guardrail system, safety net system or a PFAS.

Protection from Falling Objects:

When an employee is exposed to falling objects, the employer shall have each employee wear a hard hat and shall implement one of the following measures:

- 1) Erect toeboards, screens or a guardrail system to prevent falling objects.
- 2) Erect a canopy to protect from falling objects.
- 3) Barricade the area where the objects could fall and keep employees from entering the area. Keep objects that may fall from higher levels far enough from the edge so those objects will not go over the edge if they are accidentally displaced.

Hoist Areas:

Each employee in a hoist area shall be protected from falling to a lower level by use of a guard rail system, travel restraint system, or personal fall arrest system. When a portion of the guard rail system is removed to facilitate hoisting, and the employee must lean through or over the edge of the access opening, then a personal fall arrest system must be used.

See 1926.500 Fall Protection for more information on various fall protection systems.