

Fall Protection — Trigger Heights You Must Know

OSHA sets different fall-protection trigger heights by industry. Get the height wrong and you have an unprotected fall hazard. Get it right and you prevent the #1 cause of construction fatalities.

ANY VALUE

Holes & openings — any height

Every hole in a walking surface (including skylights) must be guarded by a cover, guardrail, or personal fall arrest system, regardless of fall distance. Covers must support twice the maximum intended load.

§1926.501(b)(4), §1910.29(e)

15 ft

Steel Erection — 15 ft

Above 15 feet, fall protection is required in steel erection. Connectors working between 15 and 30 feet must wear a personal fall arrest, restraint, or positioning system, even if not yet tied off.

§1926.760(a)(1), (b)(1)

10 ft

Scaffolds — 10 ft

Each employee on a scaffold more than 10 feet above a lower level must be protected by guardrails or a personal fall arrest system, depending on scaffold type. Cross-bracing alone is not a guardrail.

§1926.451(g)(1)

6 ft

Construction — 6 ft

In construction, fall protection is required at 6 feet or more above a lower level. Covers framing, roofing, masonry, formwork, and all general construction tasks not covered by a more specific subpart.

§1926.501(b)(1)

4 ft

General Industry — 4 ft

Any walking-working surface 4 feet or more above a lower level requires fall protection: guardrails, safety net, or personal fall arrest system. Applies to manufacturing, warehousing, retail, healthcare, and most non-construction work.

§1910.28(b)(1)

ACCEPTABLE FALL-PROTECTION SYSTEMS

Guardrails (top rail 42 in \pm 3 in), safety nets, and personal fall arrest systems (full-body harness, shock-absorbing lanyard, anchor rated 5,000 lb per worker). Body belts are NOT permitted for fall arrest.

§1926.502, §1910.140