



# OSHA Final Rule: Walking-Working Surfaces & Personal Fall Protection Systems

OSHA has issued its [final rule](#) on Walking-Working Surfaces and Personal Fall Protection Systems to better protect workers in general industry from slip, trip and fall hazards. The final rule updates and clarifies standards and adds training and inspection requirements. The final rule became effective on January 17, 2017; however, OSHA is allowing delayed or phased-in compliance dates for several requirements in the final rule. States with OSHA-approved state plans have six months to adopt standards that are *at least* as effective as Federal OSHA standards. Many state plans adopt standards identical to OSHA, but some state plans may have different or more stringent requirements.

## Some requirements of the final rule include:

- Walking-working surfaces inspection and maintenance is addressed in section 1910.22 of the final rule. It states that walking-working surfaces must be inspected “regularly and as necessary” to ensure they are well maintained and in safe condition. If hazardous conditions are identified, they must be immediately repaired or the area must be guarded to prevent employee use of the area until it is repaired.
- Portable and fixed ladders used in general industry are now addressed in section 1910.23.
- Fall protection for fixed ladders extending more than 24 feet above a lower level is addressed in section 1910.28. Cages and wells on fixed ladders will eventually be phased out as the primary means of fall protection. Fixed ladders that currently have a cage or well will have to be equipped with a ladder safety system or personal fall arrest system by November 18, 2036.
- Dockboards are addressed in section 1910.26. Dockboards must now have a means to prevent equipment from running off the edge unless it can be shown no such hazard exists. Portable dockboards must have a means for anchoring to prevent it from moving out of a safe position.
- Scaffolds used in general industry will now have to meet the requirements in the construction industry standards found in section 1926, Subpart L (Scaffolds).
- Employers must ensure that workers have fall-and-falling-object protection in certain areas and during certain operations or activities. Unless stated otherwise, this protection must comply with the criteria and work practices set forth in section 1910.29. Fall protection (guardrail, safety net or personal fall protection) must be provided any time employees are exposed to an unprotected side or open edge that is 4 feet or more above a lower level.
- Training requirements are addressed in section 1910.30. Employees exposed to fall hazards must be trained to recognize fall hazards, how to minimize the hazards and how to correctly use personal fall protection systems and equipment. This training must be completed by May 17, 2017.

## Compliance Deadlines

- Training workers on fall and equipment hazards – May 2017
- Inspection and certification of permanent building anchorages for rope descent systems – November 2017

- Installation of fall protection (personal fall arrest systems, ladder safety systems, cages, wells) on existing fixed ladders (over 24 feet) that do not have any fall protection – November 2018
- Installation of ladder safety or personal fall arrest systems on new fixed ladders (over 24 feet) and replacement ladders/ladder sections — November 2018
- Installation of ladder safety systems or personal fall arrest systems on all fixed ladders (over 24 feet) – November 2036

Additional information can be found on the [OSHA website](#).

*This blog post is a summary of some of the key points addressed in the new rule, but does not encompass everything contained in it. Employers should become familiar with the final rule and determine if any changes to current policies, procedures, training programs and/or equipment are necessary to be in compliance.*