

OSHA's Updated General Industry Walking-Working Surfaces and Fall Protection Standards to Become Effective in 2018

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PRACTICES OSHA, Labor and Employment

On January 17, 2017, the final rule to update the General Industry Walking-Working Surfaces and Fall Protection Standards became effective. According to OSHA, the updated rules provide greater flexibility in choosing a fall protection system.¹ The final rule applies to all walking-working surfaces, including floors, stairs, platforms, rope descent systems, ladders, ramps, scaffolds, elevated walkways and fall protection systems in all general industry workplaces. The standard has a rolling-effective date for employers to comply with provisions related to ladder safety systems and personal fall arrest systems on fixed ladders. (§1910.28(b)(9)). The final rule prohibits the use of cages and wells because there is wide recognition that they do not prevent workers from falling from fixed ladders, nor do they prevent injury if a fall occurs. Employers should begin to update their fall safety mechanisms to be compliant with the following standards:

- The final rule allows employers to use any one or more of the following fall protections in a particular area, situation, or activity: guardrail systems; safety net systems; personal fall protection systems; personal fall arrest systems; travel restraint systems; ladder safety systems; hand rails; and designated areas.
- The final rule grandfathers in cages and wells on existing ladders, but requires during the phase-in period that employers equip new ladders and replacement ladders/ladder sections with ladder safety or personal fall arrest systems.
- For fixed ladders erected before November 19, 2018, employers have up to 20 years to install ladder safety or personal fall system (§1910.28(b)(9)(i)(A)).
- For new fixed ladders erected on or after November 19, 2018, the employer must equip the ladder with a ladder safety or personal fall arrest system (§1910.28(b)(9)(i)(B)).
- For ladder repairs and replacements; when an employer replaces any portion of a fixed ladder the replacement must be equipped (§1910.28(b)(9)(i)(C)).

¹ [Final Rule to Update General Industry Walking-Working Surfaces and Fall Protection Standards](#), Dep't of Labor.