

“Working at heights” includes any work performed while working on ladders, stairs, roofs, elevated platforms and any other surface that is 4 feet or more above a lower level. In addition, OSHA requires that fall protection be provided when working over dangerous equipment and machinery, regardless of the fall distance.

Fall prevention can be achieved using guardrails with toeboards around every floor hole into which, or through which, a worker could potentially fall – along with any elevated open-sided platform or floor. Other common fall arrest and prevention options include safety nets, lifelines, scaffolding and personal fall arrest systems.

These considerations are only applicable to general industries, not construction industries.

Top Five Considerations When Working at Heights

1. **Ask:** Can the need for wearing fall protection be eliminated by performing work on ground level first, by using guardrail systems to surround the fall hazard or by accessing and accomplishing tasks from a manlift?
2. **Ladders:** Use the right type of ladder or scaffold for the job. Contact your supervisor if you are unsure of what is the proper ladder or scaffolding for the job when working at heights. Maintain three points of contact when climbing or working from any ladder.
3. **Training:** Ensure employees have been trained to properly put on fall protection harnesses. And, with a JSA or some other documented method ensure employees are trained for the job before performing the task. This is especially important for tasks while working at heights that are complex or for those tasks that have not been performed for some time.
4. **Equipment:** Remove any broken, defective or worn equipment, and any damaged fall protection system component from service and prevent its reuse. Inspect ladders and scaffolding for damage before use (if damaged, remove from service). Also inspect each component of your personal fall protection system for signs of wear such as fraying, burns, chemical or sun damage, and any imperfections on hardware.
5. **Double-check:** Verify that approved anchor points are secure and connected to a strong base. Anchor points should also be inspected (with documentation) at increments suggested by the manufacturer.

