

Residential Fall Protection

Since 1995, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has required workers engaged in **residential construction** who are working **six (6) feet or more** above a lower level to be protected by conventional fall protection (i.e., guardrail systems, safety net systems, or personal fall arrest systems). However, if an employer can demonstrate that conventional fall protection is infeasible **or** presents a greater hazard, OSHA allows the use of alternative fall protection measures for particular types of residential construction work. The alternative fall protection measures that will be used to eliminate or reduce the possibility of workers falling must be included in a written, site-specific fall protection plan meeting the requirements of OSHA's fall protection regulation ([29 CFR Part 1926, Subpart M](#)).

What will be required beginning June 16, 2011?

On Dec. 16, 2010 OSHA rescinded *STD 03-00-001 - STD 3-0.1A - Plain Language Revision of OSHA Instruction STD 3.1, Interim Fall Protection Compliance Guidelines for Residential Construction* which had been in place since 1995. This directive allowed employers doing specified residential construction activities to comply with the requirements of OSHA's Subpart M by implementing alternative fall protection and work procedures prescribed in the directive, however without a prior showing of infeasibility or greater hazard and without a written fall protection plan. OSHA did not intend STD 3.1 to be a permanent policy and it has been replaced by [STD 03-11-002 Compliance Guidance for Residential Construction](#), which becomes effective **June 16, 2011**.

The key changes for those engaged in residential construction include:

- Employers will need to follow 29 CFR 1926 Subpart M Fall Protection Regulations.
- Employers will be required to demonstrate the infeasibility of the required conventional fall protection systems **or** that such systems create a greater hazard if using alternative fall protection measures and a fall protection plan.
- The employer has the burden of establishing that it is appropriate to implement a fall protection plan.
- A qualified person (i.e., person with a degree or extensive experience and who has the ability to solve fall protection problems at the jobsite) must develop a site-specific, written fall protection plan when alternative fall protection methods are used.
- A single, written fall protection plan can be developed for repetitive use (e.g., for a particular style or model of home), so long as the plan fully addresses all issues related to fall protection at each site.
- The use of alternative fall protection measures is limited to "residential construction", meaning (1) the end-use of the structure being built is a home (i.e., a dwelling), and (2) the structure being built is constructed using traditional wood frame construction materials and methods (which also includes cold-formed sheet metal stud framing and masonry brick or block construction).
- Slide guards will no longer be permitted to be used in lieu of conventional fall protection methods during roofing work (removal, repair, or installation of weatherproofing roofing materials, such as shingles, tile, and tar paper). However, slide guards may be used as part of a written, site-specific fall protection plan that meets the requirements of [29 CFR 1926.502\(k\)](#) if the employer can demonstrate that the use of conventional fall protection would be infeasible **or** create greater hazards.
- When roofing work is performed on low-slope roofs (i.e. 4 in 12 pitch or less), safety monitoring systems can still be used in conjunction with a warning line system to protect workers on the

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roof. When such a roof is 50 feet or less in width, a safety monitoring system can be used alone and without a warning line system. Safety monitoring systems must meet the requirements of OSHA [29 CFR 1926.502\(h\)](#).

The differences between the requirements of the Interim Guidelines and Subpart M are summarized in the table below.

	Interim Fall Protection Guidelines (Dec. 8, 1995 – June 15, 2011)	Fall Protection Requirements of Subpart M (June 16, 2011 and beyond)
General Requirements		
Use of Conventional Methods (guardrails, safety nets, or personal fall arrest systems) for fall exposures over 6 feet	Required, unless infeasible or creates greater hazard	Required, unless infeasible or creates greater hazard
Use of Alternative Methods (slide guards, safety monitoring systems, warning line, etc.)	Allowed, for prequalified tasks identified by OSHA as meeting a greater hazard and other tasks where infeasibility or greater hazard could be demonstrated	Allowed, but employer has the burden to demonstrate conventional methods are infeasible or creates greater hazard before using
Site Specific Fall Protection Plan (only if using Alternative Methods)	Required, but does not have to be written	Required, must be written
Training	Employees must be trained to understand and follow the Fall Protection Plan	Employees must be trained to understand and follow the Fall Protection Plan
Roofing-Specific Requirements		
Low Slope Roofs (4:12 pitch or less)	Use of warning lines and safety monitoring systems allowed	Use of warning lines and safety monitoring systems allowed
Slope Roofs (over 4:12 up to and including 8:12)	Use of slide guard allowed	Guardrails or personal fall arrest system required
Steep Slope Roofs (over 8:12)	Guardrails or personal fall arrest system required	Guardrails or personal fall arrest system required

NOTE: Many states operate their own state occupational safety and health plans. These states may have adopted construction standards that are different from information presented here. If you live in a state with an [approved occupational safety and health plan](#), contact your local administrator for further information on the standards applicable in your state.

For more information about Fall Protection for the Residential Construction Industry, contact the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) Labor, Safety, & Health Policy Department at 1-800-368-5242, ext. 8507

Residential Fall Protection related Web Site Resources:

- National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) www.nahb.org/fallprotection
- OSHA Residential Fall Protection www.osha.gov/doc/residential_fall_protection.html
- NAHB’s BuilderBooks www.builderbooks.com/safety

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