**Fall Protection Requirements Updated**

*Walking-Working Surfaces Final Rule for General Industry Incorporates Construction Standards*

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has incorporated Construction standards into the General Industry Walking-Working Surfaces and Fall Protection Systems Standard. Walking-working surfaces can be floors, stairs, ladders, roofs, ramps, scaffolds, elevated walkways or fall protection systems.

Some of tasks required immediately include [employee training](https://isienvironmental.com/index.php/safety-training/osha-safety-training/) in slips, trips, falls and fall protection equipment and regular inspections and maintenance of walking-working surfaces. Inspections, maintenance, and replacements, where needed, of fall protection equipment is also required.

The rule allows employers some leeway in choosing the fall protection systems which work best for them, which has been a part of the Construction Standard. It also phases in certain protections for fixed ladder systems which extend over 24 feet. For now, cages and wells on existing ladders are ok until the year 2036. However, any new or replacement ladders must have ladder safety or personal fall arrest systems installed on them starting next year.

The new rule incorporates language for those who use rope descent systems, or RDS. No RDS should be used at heights higher than 300 feet above grade, and employers are to have the anchorage points of these RDS systems certified by November 20, 2017. This certification requires inspection, testing, and verification that it’s capable of holding 5,000 lbs. per employee.

With the rule, OSHA has deferred scaffolding requirements to the construction standard.

For more information, check out the [rule’s frequently asked questions site](https://www.osha.gov/walking-working-surfaces/faq.html) at OSHA.

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| Fall Protection Compliance Deadlines | |
| Now | * Make sure your workers are trained in fall and equipment hazards. * Regularly inspect fall protection systems and equipment. * Regularly inspect walking-working surfaces regularly and as-needed. * Correct, repair or guard your surfaces against hazardous conditions |
| 11/20/2017 | Certifications of permanent anchorages for rope descent systems are due. |
| 11/19/2018 | * New fixed ladders, replacement ladders, and replacement ladder sections over 24 feet must have personal fall arrest or ladder safety systems installed. * Existing fixed ladders over 24 feet are equipped with a cage, well, personal fall arrest system, or ladder safety system. |
| 11/18/2036 | Replace any cages or wells used for fall protection on fixed ladders over 24 feet with ladder safety or personal fall arrest systems. |