

OSHA's Revised Walking-Working Surfaces Standards

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration ([OSHA](#)), slips, trips, and falls are a leading cause of accidental deaths, disabling injuries, and reported injuries - many of these incidents are preventable. In an effort to reduce slips, trips, and falls, OSHA released a final rule to update walking-working surfaces regulations for the general industry. This update emphasizes worker protection from fall hazards in the general industry by updating, clarifying, and adding regulations, training, and inspection requirements. Many of the new additions to these regulations are elements currently outlined in construction fall protection regulations.

Many aspects of this rule became effective on January 17, 2017, including:

UPDATE	TIMELINE
Eliminating the use of guardrails as a primary fall protection method	January 17, 2017
Choosing from accepted fall protection systems that may work best in a particular situation	
Allowing use of non-conventional fall protection in certain situations, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas on low-slope roofs for temporary or infrequent work • When guardrails, safety nets, or personal fall protection systems are not feasible or create a greater hazard 	

Some provisions have delayed effective dates, allowing you to plan and accrue the resources necessary to meet new requirements. This includes the following:

UPDATE	TIMELINE
Training exposed workers on fall hazards	May 17, 2017
Training workers on using fall protection equipment	May 17, 2017
Inspecting and certifying permanent anchorages for rope descent systems	November 20, 2017
Installing personal fall arrest or ladder safety systems on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New fixed ladders over 24 feet • Replacement ladders/ladder sections 	November 19, 2018
Equipping cages, wells, personal fall arrest, or ladder safety systems on existing fixed ladders over 24 feet	November 19, 2018
Replacing cages and wells (used as fall protection) with personal fall arrest systems or ladder safety systems on all new and existing fixed ladders over 24 feet	November 18, 2036

Visit the [Federal Register](#) for additional information on the final rule. You can also visit the general industry walking-working surfaces regulations at [1910 Subpart D](#).

For additional information on the SMCX's services, please visit the SMCX-hosted website at: <https://www.smscx.org/>.