

Guardrails Toolbox Talk

According to OSHA, falls are among the most common causes of serious work-related injuries and deaths. Employers must take measures in their workplaces to prevent employees from falling off overhead platforms, elevated workstations or into holes in floors and on roofs. This topic is focused on the proper set up and use of guardrails for fall protection.

- Workers must have fall protection such as guardrails whenever they are exposed to hazards at 4' or more above a lower level.
- Guardrails must be constructed properly.
- Guardrails must be able to stand up to use and prevent someone from falling!
- Damaged or broken guardrails must be repaired or replaced immediately upon discovery.



OSHA Standard 1910.28(b)(1)(i) states *Except as provided elsewhere in this section, the employer must ensure that each employee on a walking-working surface with an unprotected side or edge that is 4 feet (1.2 m) or more above a lower level is protected from falling by one or more of the following:*

- *Guardrail systems;*
- *Safety Net systems; or*
- *Personal fall protection systems, such as personal fall arrest, travel restraint, or positioning systems.*

Proper guardrails are an essential requirement for safety.

- Top rails must be constructed at a height of 42" (plus or minus 3") and must be able to withstand 200 lbs. of force downward and outward in the direction of the hazard or fall area.
- Mid rails must be installed at a height of 21" or mid-way between the surface and the top rail and must be able to withstand 150 lbs. of force.
- Toe boards must be at least 3.5" high and designed to withstand 50 lbs. of force.
- Toe boards are an important part of falling object protection for workers on the lower levels of the worksite.

OSHA Standard 1910.29(k)(1)(ii) *Toe boards have a minimum vertical height of 3.5 inches (9 cm) as measured from the top edge of the toe board to the level of the walking-working surface.*

Remember these important factors when guardrails are used for fall protection at a work site:

- Workers must have fall protection such as guardrails whenever they are exposed to hazards at 4' or more above a lower level.
- Guardrails must be constructed properly according to specific OSHA rules.
- Top rails must be constructed at a height of 42" (plus or minus 3") and must be able to withstand 200 lbs. of force downward and outward in the direction of the hazard or fall area.
- Mid rails must be installed at a height of 21" or mid-way between the surface and the top rail and must be able to withstand 150 lbs. of force.
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