

WAC 296-32-24012 Fall protection. In addition to the following requirements also see WAC 296-32-22555.

(1) The employer shall ensure that at least two qualified climbers are on-site at all times when employees are exposed to fall hazards above four feet.

(2) The employer shall require employees to adhere to acceptable conditions for access, prior to climbing the tower at heights above four feet.

(3) Prior to employees being exposed to elevations above four feet, the employer shall ensure that 100 percent fall protection systems compatible with the tasks assigned are provided, used, and maintained as required in this chapter and in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications.

(4) In addition to the requirements of WAC 296-32-24005 (5) through (7), all of the following shall occur prior to employees climbing the tower at heights above four feet:

(a) The planning and inspections shall be performed and documented.

(i) All projects requiring climbing shall be planned by a competent person.

(ii) The documentation shall be maintained on-site while work is being performed.

(iii) The documentation shall include the date of the planning and inspection, the name of the competent person performing the planning and inspection, and the site location.

(b) All climbing facilities shall be visually inspected daily at the tower base by a competent person for rust, corrosion, deterioration, structural, mechanical, or other hazards on the climbing facilities that could lead to death or injury of an employee in the performance of their duties. Additionally, the climbing facilities shall be visually inspected for these items as the employees ascend to the elevation point where work is being performed. If any such hazard is identified during this inspection, employees shall not use the climbing facility until such hazards are abated.

(c) Components of a fall protection system (including anchor points) and the fall protection equipment used by employees shall be compatible with one another.

(d) Employees must use engineered anchor points or anchor points designated by a competent person.

Note: Additional requirements relating to cranes and personnel lifting are located in chapter 296-155 WAC, Part L.

(5) An employer shall comply with the requirements of this section in one of the following ways:

(a) Require employees to use the 100 percent fall protection systems.

(b) If the fall protection systems described in this section are not present or do not meet the manufacturer's specifications, the employer shall not permit employees to climb the tower at heights above four feet unless an alternative means of access to the work area is used such as an aerial lift, elevated work platform or other engineered systems.

(6) Positioning device system specifications. Positioning device systems must be used in conjunction with 100 percent fall protection systems and their use shall conform to the following provisions:

(a) Positioning harnesses or full body harnesses shall be used.

(b) Positioning devices shall be rigged to prevent an employee from a free fall greater than two feet.

(c) Positioning devices shall be secured to an anchorage capable of supporting at least twice the potential impact load of an employee's fall or three thousand pounds (13.3 kN), whichever is greater.

(d) Connectors shall be drop forged, pressed or formed steel, or made of equivalent materials.

(e) Connectors shall have a corrosion-resistant finish, and all surfaces and edges shall be smooth to prevent damage to interfacing parts of this system.

(f) Connecting assemblies shall have a minimum breaking strength of five thousand pounds (22.2 kN).

(g) D-rings and snap hooks shall be proof-tested to a minimum tensile load of three thousand six hundred pounds (16 kN) without cracking, breaking, or taking permanent deformation.

(h) Snap hooks shall be a locking type snap hook designed and used to prevent disengagement of the snap hook by the contact of the snap hook keeper by the connected member.

(i) Reserved.

(j) Unless the snap hook is designed for the following connections, snap hooks shall not be engaged:

(i) Directly to webbing, rope or wire rope;

(ii) To each other;

(iii) To a D-ring to which another snap hook or other connector is attached;

(iv) To a horizontal lifeline; or

(v) To any object which is incompatibly shaped or dimensioned in relation to the snap hook such that unintentional disengagement could occur by the connected object being able to depress the snap hook keeper and release itself.

(7) Vertical lifelines.

(a) All employees suspended from a boatswain's chair or rope descent system must use an independent fall arrest system where the fall arrest anchorage is separate from the suspension system anchorage.

(b) All employees must be connected at all times to the fall arrest system while they are suspended.

(c) All rope used for suspended personnel must have a minimum breaking strength of five thousand pounds for each employee.

(d) Rope used for suspended personnel must not be used for material handling.

(e) The design of a descent control mechanism shall prevent the device from causing an uncontrolled descent.

(f) The design of the manual descent device shall permit operation only when rigged in the correct manner.

(8) Self-rescue devices. Self-rescue devices are not a fall protection system. Self-rescue devices used to self-rescue after a fall shall meet the following requirements:

(a) Use self-rescue devices according to the manufacturer's instructions; and

(b) Self-rescue devices must be addressed by the fall protection work plan.

(9) When working from an aerial lift/crane basket:

(a) Employees must maintain 100 percent fall protection;

(i) When accessing the tower/structure from the aerial lift/crane basket the employee must first tie-off to the tower/structure; and

(ii) After tying-off to the tower/structure the employee must then immediately unhook from the aerial lift/crane basket and access the tower.

Note: An approved break away lanyard may be used to maintain 100 percent fall protection.

(b) Employees must maintain 100 percent fall protection:

(i) When accessing the aerial lift/crane basket from the tower/structure the employee must first tie-off to the aerial lift/crane basket; and

(ii) Then immediately access the aerial lift/crane basket; and

(iii) Then immediately unhook from the tower/structure.

Note: If all the requirements in subsection (9) of this section are met, the aerial lift guardrails may be used to access the tower and get back into the aerial platform.

(10) Ladder safety systems and related support systems for climbing facilities that are used by employees as a means of 100 percent fall protection shall conform to all of the following criteria:

(a) Prior to climbing the structure, a competent person shall ensure that the ladder safety system has been inspected for proper operation and that all components used with the ladder safety system are compatible.

(b) To perform an inspection, the competent person shall do all of the following:

(i) Approach the ladder at the base and connect to the functional safety climb system.

(ii) Attach to the base of the fall arrest system. If the attachment point is above six feet, then 100 percent fall protection shall be used. The 100 percent fall protection shall be attached to an alternate approved anchorage point.

(iii) Forcibly engage the device without letting go of the ladder.

(iv) If the device does not function properly, employees shall not use the device until it functions properly.

(c) If a climbing facility is obstructed, inhibiting the effective use of the ladder safety system, an alternative means of 100 percent fall protection shall be used that is at least as effective as the types of fall protection described by this chapter.

(11) Fall protection work plan. The employer shall develop and implement a written fall protection work plan including each area of the work place where the employees are assigned and where fall hazards of ten feet or more exist.

(a) The fall protection work plan shall include, but not be limited to:

(i) Identify all fall hazards in the work area;

(ii) Describe the method of fall arrest or fall restraint to be provided;

(iii) Describe the proper procedures for the assembly, maintenance, inspection, and disassembly of the fall protection system to be used;

(iv) Describe the proper procedures for the handling, storage, and securing of tools and materials;

(v) Describe the method of providing overhead protection for employees who may be in, or pass through the area below the worksite;

(vi) Describe the method for prompt, safe removal of injured employees; and

(vii) Be available on the job site for inspection by the department.

(b) Prior to permitting employees into areas where fall hazards exist the employer shall ensure employees are trained and instructed in the items described in this section.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 49.17.010, 49.17.040, 49.17.050, 49.17.060, and chapter 49.17 RCW. WSR 17-20-069, § 296-32-24012, filed 10/2/17, effective 1/1/18.]