

WAC 296-880-20005 Fall protection required at four feet or more.

The employer must ensure that fall arrest systems, fall restraint systems, or positioning device systems are provided, installed, and implemented in accordance with WAC 296-880-400 Fall protection system specifications when employees are exposed to fall hazards of four feet or more to the ground or lower level.

(1) Walking/working surfaces with unprotected sides or edges. Except as required in subsections (2) through (10) of this section, the employer must ensure that each employee on a walking/working surface with an unprotected side or edge four feet or more above the ground or lower level is protected by one of the following fall protection systems:

(a) A standard guardrail system, or the equivalent, as specified in WAC 296-880-40005, on all open sides, except where there is entrance to a ramp, stairway, or ladder. The guardrail must be provided with a standard toeboard wherever: Beneath the open sides, persons can pass, there is moving machinery, or there is equipment with which falling materials could create a hazard.

(i) When employees are using stilts, the height of the top rail or equivalent member of the guardrail system must be increased (or additional rails may be added) an amount equal to the height of the stilts while maintaining the strength specifications of the guardrail system.

(ii) Where employees are working on or from platforms or ladders above the protection of the guardrail system, the employer must either increase the height of the guardrail system (or additional rails may be added) or select and implement another fall protection system as specified in (b), (c), (d), (e), or (f) of this subsection.

(iii) When guardrails must be temporarily removed to perform a specific task, the area must be constantly attended by an employee until the guardrail is replaced. The only duty the employee must perform is to warn persons entering the area of the fall hazard. The employee must be protected from the fall hazard by a personal fall arrest system or personal fall restraint system.

(b) A personal fall restraint system;

(c) A personal fall arrest system;

(d) A safety net system;

(e) A catch platform; or

(f) A warning line system.

(2) Guarding of ramps, runways, and inclined walkways.

(a) Ramps, runways, and inclined walkways that are four feet or more above the ground or lower level must be equipped with a standard guardrail system or the equivalent, as specified in WAC 296-880-40005, along each open side. Wherever tools, machine parts, or materials are likely to be used on the runway, a toeboard must also be installed on each open side to protect persons working or passing below.

(b) Runways used exclusively for special purposes may have the guardrail on one side omitted where operating conditions necessitate such omission, provided the falling hazard is minimized by using a runway not less than 18 inches wide.

Note: See WAC 296-880-40010 for other specific criteria for ramps, runways, and inclined walkways.

(3) Holes.

(a) The employer must protect employees from falling into or through holes four feet or more to the ground or lower level by one of the following fall protection systems:

(i) A standard guardrail system, or the equivalent, as specified in WAC 296-880-40005, on all open sides, except where there is entrance to a ramp, stairway, or ladder. The guardrail must be provided with a standard toeboard wherever, beneath the open sides, persons can pass, or there is moving machinery, or there is equipment with which falling materials could create a hazard;

(ii) A cover, as specified in WAC 296-880-40015;

(iii) A warning line system erected at least 15 feet from all unprotected sides or edges of the hole and meets the requirements of WAC 296-880-40040;

(iv) When the cover, guardrail system, or warning line system must be temporarily removed to perform a specific task, an employee must remain at the hole until the cover, guardrail system, or warning line system is replaced. The only duty the employee must perform is to warn persons entering the area of the fall hazard. The employee must be protected from the fall hazard by a personal fall arrest system or personal fall restraint system; or

(v) Personal fall arrest systems or personal fall restraint systems.

(b) The employer must guard skylight holes and skylights.

(i) Unprotected skylight holes must be guarded by covers of standard strength and construction, standard guardrail systems on all exposed sides, or employees must be protected by personal fall restraint systems, or personal fall arrest systems.

(ii) If the skylight has been installed and is not capable of supporting, without failure, at least twice the weight of employees, equipment, and materials that may be imposed on the skylight at any one time, the skylight must be guarded by a cover of standard strength and construction, a standard guardrail system on all sides, or employees must be protected by personal fall restraint systems, or personal fall arrest systems.

(c) The employer must guard hatchways and chute holes by one of the following:

(i) Hinged covers of standard strength and construction and a standard guardrail system with only one exposed side. When the hole is not in use, the cover must be closed or the exposed side must be guarded at both top and intermediate positions by removable standard guardrail systems; or

(ii) A removable standard guardrail system with toeboard on not more than two sides of the hole and fixed standard guardrail system with toeboards on all other exposed sides. The removable guardrail must be kept in a place when the hole is not in use and must be hinged or otherwise mounted so as to be conveniently replaceable.

(d) The employer must guard ladderways or platforms by a standard guardrail system with standard toeboards on all exposed sides, except at the entrance to a hole, with the passage through the guardrail either provided with a swinging gate or so offset that a person cannot walk directly into the hole.

(e) The employer must guard pits and trap door holes by covers of standard strength and construction. While the cover is not in place, the pit or trap door holes must be protected on all exposed sides by a standard guardrail system.

(f) The employer must guard repair pits, service pits, and assembly pits by a cover, a guardrail system, a fall restraint system or fall arrest system.

(g) The employer must guard manholes by standard covers which need not be hinged in place. While the cover is not in place, the hole

must be constantly attended or must be protected by a removable standard guardrail system.

(4) Guarding of openings. The employer must ensure that each employee working on, at, above, or near openings (including those with chutes attached) where the outside bottom edge of the opening is four feet or more above a lower level and the inside bottom edge of the opening is less than 39 inches above the working surface, are protected from falling by the use of a guardrail system, a safety net system, a personal fall arrest system, or personal fall restraint system.

(5) Fall protection during form and reinforcing work. The employer must ensure that employees exposed to fall hazards of four feet or more while placing or tying reinforcing steel or working on the face of formwork or reinforcing steel are protected by personal fall arrest systems, positioning device systems, or safety net systems.

(6) Fall protection on steep pitched roofs. Regardless of the work activity, the employer must ensure that employees exposed to fall hazards of four feet or more while working on a roof with a pitch greater than four in 12 use one of the following:

(a) Fall restraint system. Safety monitor systems and warning line systems are prohibited on steep pitched roofs;

(b) A personal fall arrest system; or

(c) A positioning device system.

(7) Fall protection on low pitched roofs. The employer must ensure that employees exposed to fall hazards of four feet or more while engaged in work, other than roofing work or constructing a leading edge on low pitched roofs use one of the following:

(a) A personal fall restraint system;

(b) A personal fall arrest system;

(c) A positioning device system;

(d) A warning line system;

(e) A standard guardrail system;

(f) Safety watch system when work, other than construction work, is performed that is both infrequent and temporary, and not within six feet of the roof edge.

Exception: When work, other than construction work, is performed 15 feet or more from the roof edge, the employer is not required to provide any fall protection, provided the work is both infrequent and temporary and the employer implements and enforces a work rule prohibiting employees from going within 15 feet of the roof edge without using fall protection in accordance with (a) through (f) of this subsection.

(8) Hazardous slopes. Employees exposed to falls of four feet or more while performing construction work on a hazardous slope must use personal fall restraint systems or positioning device systems.

(9) Vehicles and rolling stock. The employer must ensure that employees exposed to fall hazards of four feet or more to the ground or lower level from vehicles or rolling stock on which employees must be located in order to perform their job duties are protected by fall arrest systems, fall restraint systems, or positioning device systems.

Exception: Where suitable anchorages cannot be provided or when the use of fall protection creates a greater hazard, work may be performed on vehicles or rolling stock without a fall protection system.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 49.17.010, 49.17.040, 49.17.050, and 49.17.060. WSR 22-19-082, § 296-880-20005, filed 9/20/22, effective 11/1/22. Statutory Authority: RCW 49.17.010, 49.17.040, 49.17.050, 49.17.060, and chapter 49.17 RCW. WSR 20-12-091, § 296-880-20005, filed 6/2/20, effective 10/1/20.]