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What You Need to Know: OSHA's New Fall Protection Regulations

In November, OSHA issued a final rule on Walking-Working Surfaces and Personal Fall Protection Systems (29 CFR 1910 Subparts D&I). These updated regulations stand to have a major impact on maintaining a compliant fall protection program.

It is critical for you to understand these new regulations, which go into effect on Jan. 17, 2017. But the document in the is more than 500



We have provided a Top 5 list to provide an overview of items likely to impact your fall protection program:

1. The clock is ticking. Although the official effective date is less than a month away, several aspects of the new rule have specified compliance dates. While one is as far out as 2036, the other dates are more urgent. For example, workers exposed to fall hazards or those using fall protection equipment must receive training by May 2017.

2. Impacts to roof work. One of the most common questions related to roof work is: What is a safe distance to an unprotected roof edge? The new rule provides some clarification to this, despite OSHA's previous stance that there is no safe distance. The regulation states that work at less than 6 feet from the roof edge requires conventional means of protection (guardrail, PFAS, etc.). From 6-15 feet, the new rule allows for a designated area for infrequent or temporary work, which are further defined in the commentary section of the rule. Similar to the construction regulations, a warning line is also required at 6 feet to serve as a warning that a worker is nearing an unprotected edge. For work more than 15 feet from a roof edge, the new rule states that the employer is not required to provide any fall protection, provided the work is both infrequent and temporary. In this last case, the language allows for the application of an administrative control preventing workers from getting closer than 15 feet from an unprotected edge.

3. New information for ladders, stairs, and guardrail. First, the new rule includes additional approved types: alternating tread-type stair; combination ladders; and mobile ladder stand platforms. The rule also now includes specific requirements for spiral stairs and ship stairs. Another major change is that ladder safety systems will be required on ladders for falls greater than 24 feet. The enforcement of this requirement will start in November 2018 for new ladders, and every ladder will be required to comply with this by 2036. For guardrail, the general industry regulations are now aligned with the construction rules, requiring a height of 42 inches (+/- 3 inches). The new rule also codifies the requirement that openings cannot be greater than 19 inches. The regulation also excludes the use of chains to close access openings and no longer allows for a "parapet alternative" option – where a shorter (30-inch) barrier, such as a parapet, was allowed, as long as it had sufficient width (18 inches).

4. Need for Competent and Qualified Persons. The new rule is much more specific about the roles of Competent and Qualified persons and indicates distinct training and responsibilities for personnel with these designations. There are specific references to the need for a Qualified Person for the following:

- Training of workers, which had historically been tied to the Competent Person
- When correction or repair involves structural integrity of a walking-working surface
- Inspecting knots in a lanyard or vertical lifeline
- Annual inspection of rope descent anchorages
- Anchorage certification

5. Requirement for workplace assessments. One of the most significant requirements provided in the new rule is the need for the assessment of fall hazards. 1910.132(d) now requires workplace assessment, so employers must do the following to avoid non-compliance:

- Determine whether hazards are present and, when present, communicate to employees, select types of PPE to protect employees, and ensure proper fit of equipment.
- Coordinate with other entities to assess hazards for multi-employer sites.
- Document the completion of assessments, including what workplaces were evaluated, who certifies that an evaluation was performed

LJB is hosting a series of webinars to provide more detail on the most impactful items in the new regulations. For more information, see [this link](#).

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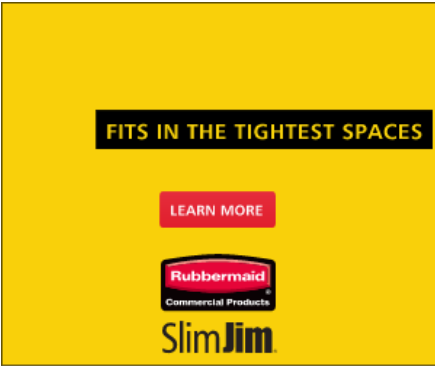
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