

SECTION 6 - FALL PROTECTION PROGRAM

Regulatory Basis: 29 CFR 1926.500(a)-(b), 1926.501(a)-(c), 1926.502(a)-(k), and 1926.503 (introductory text, (a)-(c), and concluding Note); steel-erection scope and controlling-contractor duties in 29 CFR 1926.750(b)(1) and (c), 1926.759(b), and 1926.760(e). These provisions are stated from the eCFR text as of September 24, 2026.

Referenced provisions: The routing and training references also identify 29 CFR 1926.21, 1926.104, 1926.105, 1926.107, 1926.752(a) and (c), 1926.755(b)(2), 1926.759(b), 1926.760(e), and Subparts L, R, S, V, X, and CC; Subpart M Appendices A, B, and C are referenced for particular methods. The date above applies to the reproduced provisions; routed standards and appendix methods require the separate checks in Section 6.15.

6.1 Scope, Routing, and Responsibility

Company scope: Demo Company LLC is a Texas general contractor with 300 employees performing commercial and light-industrial new construction and renovation. Projects include steel and concrete frames, formwork, low-slope roofing by company crews, floor and wall openings, footing and utility excavations, and hoist areas. The company crews' leading-edge decking covered by this program is concrete deck formwork; structural steel and metal-deck installation are subcontracted. Demo Company LLC is a private employer in Texas under federal OSHA jurisdiction; no state plan applies to this employer.

Construction scope and inspection exception: This subpart sets forth requirements and criteria for fall protection in construction workplaces covered under 29 CFR part 1926. Exception: The provisions of this subpart do not apply when employees are making an inspection, investigation, or assessment of workplace conditions prior to the actual start of construction work or after all construction work has been completed. (29 CFR 1926.500(a)(1)).

Duty routing: Section 1926.501 sets forth those workplaces, conditions, operations, and circumstances for which fall protection shall be provided, except for the work routed to other standards by 29 CFR 1926.500(a)(2) (i)-(vii), listed below. (29 CFR 1926.500(a)(2)).

Scaffolds: Fall protection for employees working on scaffolds is governed by Subpart L. (29 CFR 1926.500(a)(2) (i)).

Cranes and derricks: Fall protection for employees working on cranes and derricks is governed by Subpart CC. (29 CFR 1926.500(a)(2)(ii)).

Steel erection: Fall protection for employees performing steel erection work, except for towers and tanks, is governed by Subpart R. (29 CFR 1926.500(a)(2)(iii)). Steel erection activities include hoisting, laying out, placing, connecting, welding, burning, guying, bracing, bolting, plumbing and rigging structural steel, steel joists and metal buildings; installing metal decking, curtain walls, window walls, siding systems, miscellaneous metals, ornamental iron and similar materials; and moving point-to-point while performing these activities. (29 CFR 1926.750(b)(1)). Company scope: All listed steel erection activities are subcontracted; company crews' decking is concrete deck formwork.

Steel erection - protection from falling objects other than materials being hoisted: The controlling contractor shall bar other construction processes below steel erection unless overhead protection for the employees below is provided. (29 CFR 1926.759(b)). Company application: Demo Company LLC applies this controlling-contractor duty to all other construction processes below subcontracted steel erection, including work by company crews.

Steel erection - custody of fall protection: Fall protection provided by the steel erector shall remain in the area where steel erection activity has been completed, to be used by other trades, only if the controlling contractor or its authorized representative: (1) Has directed the steel erector to leave the fall protection in place; and (2) Has inspected and accepted control and responsibility of the fall protection prior to authorizing persons other than steel erectors to work in the area. (29 CFR 1926.760(e)). Company application: Carlos Mendoza is Demo Company LLC's authorized representative for this duty; company crews may use this protection only after he has completed both steps, before he authorizes their work in the area.

Tunneling equipment: Fall protection for employees working on certain types of equipment used in tunneling operations is governed by Subpart S. (29 CFR 1926.500(a)(2)(iv)).

Tanks and towers: Fall protection for employees erecting tanks and communication and broadcast towers is governed by Sec. 1926.105. (29 CFR 1926.500(a)(2)(v)).

Electric transmission and distribution: Subpart V governs fall protection for employees working from aerial lifts or on poles, towers, or similar structures while constructing electric transmission or distribution lines or equipment. (29 CFR 1926.500(a)(2)(vi)).

Stairways and ladders: Fall protection for employees working on stairways and ladders is governed by Subpart X. (29 CFR 1926.500(a)(2)(vii)).

System-criteria routing: Section 1926.502 sets forth the requirements for the installation, construction, and proper use of fall protection required by part 1926, except as stated in Section 6.15. (29 CFR 1926.500(a)(3)).

Training scope: Section 1926.503 sets forth requirements for training in the installation and use of fall protection systems, except in relation to steel erection activities and the use of equipment covered by subpart CC. (29 CFR 1926.500(a)(4)).

Scope-out - precast: Demo Company LLC performs no precast concrete erection; the precast-erection duty, alternatives, exception and burden-of-proof note, and the precast-specific control-line distance do not apply to the company's work. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(12); 29 CFR 1926.502(g)(1)(ii)).

Scope-out - residential: Demo Company LLC performs no residential construction; the residential-construction duty, alternatives, exception and burden-of-proof note do not apply to the company's work. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(13)).

Company's chosen method: Carlos Mendoza, Safety Officer and the company's competent person for fall protection, coordinates this program. Priya Shah is the backup contact; Robert Hayes is the owner. Carlos verifies task-specific qualifications before performing a qualified-person function; if his qualifications for that function have not been confirmed, work stays on hold while he arranges a qualified specialist. Record the qualifications supporting each specialist's assignment.

Company's chosen method: Before releasing work, Carlos records the task, surface, fall and falling-object hazards, selected protection, system inspections, employee training, and rescue arrangements. Apply the task rules in Section 6.2, the falling-object criteria in Section 6.4, the impact-loading and rescue criteria in Section 6.6, and the system criteria and conditional leading-edge plan procedure in Sections 6.7-6.14. Keep routed scaffold, steel, crane, tank/tower, electrical-line, tunneling-equipment, and stairway/ladder work under its governing standard; this section supplies no substitute trigger for that work.

Reading this program: Sections 6.1-6.6 give the field sequence. Sections 6.7-6.13 contain the criteria for guardrails, personal fall arrest, positioning, safety nets, covers, warning lines, controlled access zones, and safety monitoring; the falling-object criteria (29 CFR 1926.502(j)) are in Section 6.4, and the impact-loading and rescue criteria (29 CFR 1926.502(d)(19)-(20)) are in Section 6.6. Section 6.14 contains the conditional leading-edge plan procedure. Section 6.15 completes routing and referenced-material limits; Section 6.16 supplies the remaining definitions. Paragraph references within reproduced regulatory text refer to the cited regulation.

Statement labels: CFR-cited duty and definition paragraphs reproduce or summarize the cited regulation. Paragraphs labelled as applications or program interpretations explain how this program applies the cited provisions; their requirements are mandatory under this program, and their wording is not a quotation of the regulation. "Company policy (exceeds ...)" identifies a stricter company rule, with the regulatory rule stated separately. "Company's chosen method" identifies the company procedures and assignments used to meet the requirements.

6.2 Duty to Have Fall Protection

Employer duty and system conformity: This section sets forth requirements for employers to provide fall protection systems. All fall protection required by this section shall conform to the criteria set forth in Sec. 1926.502 of this subpart. (29 CFR 1926.501(a)(1)).

Verify surface strength before access: The employer shall determine if the walking/working surfaces on which its employees are to work have the strength and structural integrity to support employees safely. Employees shall be allowed to work on those surfaces only when the surfaces have the requisite strength and structural integrity. (29 CFR 1926.501(a)(2)).

Hole: Hole means a gap or void 2 inches (5.1 cm) or more in its least dimension, in a floor, roof, or other walking/working surface. (29 CFR 1926.500(b), definition of Hole).

Opening: Opening means a gap or void 30 inches (76 cm) or more high and 18 inches (48 cm) or more wide, in a wall or partition, through which employees can fall to a lower level. (29 CFR 1926.500(b), definition of Opening).

Leading edge: Leading edge means the edge of a floor, roof, or formwork for a floor or other walking/working surface (such as the deck) which changes location as additional floor, roof, decking, or formwork sections are placed, formed, or constructed. A leading edge is considered to be an "unprotected side and edge" during periods when it is not actively and continuously under construction. (29 CFR 1926.500(b), definition of Leading edge).

Low-slope roof: Low-slope roof means a roof having a slope less than or equal to 4 in 12 (vertical to horizontal). (29 CFR 1926.500(b), definition of Low-slope roof).

Roofing work: Roofing work means the hoisting, storage, application, and removal of roofing materials and equipment, including related insulation, sheet metal, and vapor barrier work, but not including the construction of the roof deck. (29 CFR 1926.500(b), definition of Roofing work).

Unprotected sides and edges: Each employee on a walking/working surface (horizontal and vertical surface) with an unprotected side or edge which is 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above a lower level shall be protected from falling by the use of guardrail systems, safety net systems, or personal fall arrest systems. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(1)).

Constructing leading edges: Each employee who is constructing a leading edge 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above lower levels shall be protected from falling by guardrail systems, safety net systems, or personal fall arrest systems. Exception: When the employer can demonstrate that it is infeasible or creates a greater hazard to use these systems, the employer shall develop and implement a fall protection plan which meets the requirements of paragraph (k) of Sec. 1926.502. Note: There is a presumption that it is feasible and will not create a greater hazard to implement at least one of the above-listed fall protection systems. Accordingly, the employer has the burden of establishing that it is appropriate to implement a fall protection plan which complies with Sec. 1926.502(k) for a particular workplace situation, in lieu of implementing any of those systems. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(2)(i)).

Other employees where leading edges are being built: Each employee on a walking/working surface 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above a lower level where leading edges are under construction, but who is not engaged in the leading edge work, shall be protected from falling by a guardrail system, safety net system, or personal fall arrest system. If a guardrail system is chosen to provide the fall protection, and a controlled access zone has already been established for leading edge work, the control line may be used in lieu of a guardrail along the edge that parallels the leading edge. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(2)(ii)).

Hoist areas: Each employee in a hoist area shall be protected from falling 6 feet (1.8 m) or more to lower levels by guardrail systems or personal fall arrest systems. If guardrail systems, [or chain, gate, or guardrail] or portions thereof, are removed to facilitate the hoisting operation (e.g., during landing of materials), and an employee must lean through the access opening or out over the edge of the access opening (to receive or guide equipment and materials, for example), that employee shall be protected from fall hazards by a personal fall arrest system. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(3)).

Falling through holes, including skylights: Each employee on walking/working surfaces shall be protected from falling through holes (including skylights) more than 6 feet (1.8 m) above lower levels, by personal fall arrest systems, covers, or guardrail systems erected around such holes. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(4)(i)).

Tripping or stepping into holes: Each employee on a walking/working surface shall be protected from tripping in or stepping into or through holes (including skylights) by covers. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(4)(ii)).

Objects falling through holes: Each employee on a walking/working surface shall be protected from objects falling through holes (including skylights) by covers. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(4)(iii)).

Formwork and reinforcing steel: Each employee on the face of formwork or reinforcing steel shall be protected from falling 6 feet (1.8 m) or more to lower levels by personal fall arrest systems, safety net systems, or positioning device systems. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(5)).

Ramps, runways, and other walkways: Each employee on ramps, runways, and other walkways shall be protected from falling 6 feet (1.8 m) or more to lower levels by guardrail systems. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(6)).

Excavation edges obscured from view: Each employee at the edge of an excavation 6 feet (1.8 m) or more in depth shall be protected from falling by guardrail systems, fences, or barricades when the excavations are not readily seen because of plant growth or other visual barrier. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(7)(i)).

Wells, pits, shafts, and similar excavations: Each employee at the edge of a well, pit, shaft, and similar excavation 6 feet (1.8 m) or more in depth shall be protected from falling by guardrail systems, fences, barricades, or covers. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(7)(ii)).

Application of the walkway duty - excavations: Lower levels include excavations. Each employee on a walkway over an excavation shall be protected from falling 6 feet (1.8 m) or more to lower levels by guardrail systems. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(6); 29 CFR 1926.500(b), definition of Lower levels).

Dangerous equipment below 6 feet: Each employee less than 6 feet (1.8 m) above dangerous equipment shall be protected from falling into or onto the dangerous equipment by guardrail systems or by equipment guards. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(8)(i)).

Dangerous equipment at 6 feet or more: Each employee 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above dangerous equipment shall be protected from fall hazards by guardrail systems, personal fall arrest systems, or safety net systems. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(8)(ii)).

Overhand bricklaying and related work: Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (b) of this section, each employee performing overhand bricklaying and related work 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above lower levels, shall be protected from falling by guardrail systems, safety net systems, personal fall arrest systems, or shall work in a controlled access zone. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(9)(i)).

Reaching below the working surface: Each employee reaching more than 10 inches (25 cm) below the level of the walking/working surface on which they are working, shall be protected from falling by a guardrail system, safety net system, or personal fall arrest system. Note: Bricklaying operations performed on scaffolds are regulated by subpart L-Scaffolds of this part. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(9)(ii)).

Roofing on low-slope roofs: Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (b) of this section, each employee engaged in roofing activities on low-slope roofs, with unprotected sides and edges 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above lower levels shall be protected from falling by guardrail systems, safety net systems, personal fall arrest systems, or a combination of warning line system and guardrail system, warning line system and safety net system, or warning line system and personal fall arrest system, or warning line system and safety monitoring system. Or, on roofs 50-feet (15.25 m) or less in width (see appendix A to subpart M of this part), the use of a safety monitoring system alone [i.e. without the warning line system] is permitted. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(10)).

Steep roofs, if encountered: Each employee on a steep roof with unprotected sides and edges 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above lower levels shall be protected from falling by guardrail systems with toeboards, safety net systems, or personal fall arrest systems. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(11)).

Wall openings: Each employee working on, at, above, or near wall openings (including those with chutes attached) where the outside bottom edge of the wall opening is 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above lower levels and the inside bottom edge of the wall opening is less than 39 inches (1.0 m) above the walking/working surface, shall be protected from falling by the use of a guardrail system, a safety net system, or a personal fall arrest system. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(14)).

Other walking/working surfaces: Except as provided in Sec. 1926.500(a)(2) or in Sec. 1926.501 (b)(1) through (b)(14), each employee on a walking/working surface 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above lower levels shall be protected from falling by a guardrail system, safety net system, or personal fall arrest system. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(15)).

Protection during cover removal - application of the hole duties: For each employee on a walking/working surface exposed to falling through a hole (including a skylight) more than 6 feet (1.8 m) above a lower level, the listed fall-through protections are personal fall arrest systems, covers, or guardrail systems erected around the hole. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(4)(i)). With the cover removed, the remaining listed fall-through protections are personal fall arrest systems or guardrail systems erected around the hole. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(4)(i)). The separate trip/step-through and falling-object duties require covers, without a height threshold. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(4)(ii); 29 CFR 1926.501(b)(4)(iii)).

Company's chosen method: Before removing a cover, Carlos verifies the applicable fall-through protection and keeps employees out of areas where they could trip or step into or through the opening or be exposed to objects falling through it. If those exposures cannot be prevented without a cover, leave or replace the cover and hold the task. Maintain the verified controls throughout the task; replace and secure the cover promptly when the opening is no longer needed.

Company policy (exceeds 29 CFR 1926.501(b)(4)(i)): Apply the fall-through protection trigger at 6 feet as well as above 6 feet.

Company's chosen method: Carlos must resolve any proposed infeasibility/greater-hazard exception through every requirement in Section 6.14 before releasing work.

Company policy (exceeds 29 CFR 1926.501(b)(10)): Carlos does not approve a monitoring-only roof layout from a width estimate; use a warning-line combination or a conventional system unless the roof width has been checked using the method referenced in Appendix A to Subpart M (a non-mandatory guideline; see Section 6.15).

Roof-deck construction: Roof-deck construction is excluded from roofing work. (29 CFR 1926.500(b), definition of Roofing work).

Application to roof-deck work: For roof-deck construction governed by Subpart M, use the applicable task-specific rules above, including the leading-edge or unprotected-edge rule as applicable. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(1), (b)(2), (b)(15)). The roofing options in 29 CFR 1926.501(b)(10) and the roofing-specific falling-object criteria in 29 CFR 1926.502(j)(7) do not apply to that deck construction. (29 CFR 1926.500(b), definition of Roofing work; 29 CFR 1926.501(b)(10); 29 CFR 1926.502(j)(7)). Metal-deck installation follows the steel-erection route in Section 6.1. (29 CFR 1926.750(b)(1); 29 CFR 1926.500(a)(2)(iii)).

6.3 Select and Install the Systems

Conformity: Fall protection systems required by this part shall comply with the applicable provisions of this section. (29 CFR 1926.502(a)(1)).

Install protection and satisfy the other requirements before work: Employers shall provide and install all fall protection systems required by this subpart for an employee, and shall comply with all other pertinent requirements of this subpart before that employee begins the work that necessitates the fall protection. (29 CFR 1926.502(a)(2)).

Steel-erector protection - application: Before authorizing company crews to work in an area using fall protection left by the steel erector, Carlos completes both custody steps in Section 6.1. (29 CFR 1926.760(e)).

Company's chosen method: Carlos selects systems in this order: confirm the task rule in Section 6.2; select a permitted system or combination; verify its detailed criteria; verify installer training in erection and inspection, the installers' own required protection throughout installation, and prompt rescue or assured self-rescue where they use personal fall arrest; install and inspect the system; verify training, protection, and rescue readiness for its users; then release the task. The following are selected field checks; they do not replace the system criteria in Sections 6.7-6.13, the falling-object criteria in Section 6.4, and the impact-loading and rescue criteria in Section 6.6; apply Section 6.14 if the conditional leading-edge plan option is proposed.

Guardrails: Top rails are 42 inches (1.1 m) plus or minus 3 inches (8 cm) above the walking/working level; when conditions warrant, they may exceed 45 inches if all other guardrail criteria are met. Increase top-rail height by the height of any stilts in use. Install midrails, screens, mesh, intermediate vertical members, or equivalent intermediate structural members between the top edge and the walking/working surface when there is no wall or parapet wall at least 21 inches (53 cm) high; midrails, when used, are midway between the top edge and the walking/working level. (29 CFR 1926.502(b)(1); 29 CFR 1926.502(b)(2); 29 CFR 1926.502(b)(2)(i)). Guardrail systems shall be capable of withstanding, without failure, a force of at least 200 pounds (890 N) applied within 2 inches (5.1 cm) of the top edge, in any outward or downward direction, at any point along the top edge. (29 CFR 1926.502(b)(3)).

Personal fall arrest: Body belts are not acceptable as part of a personal fall arrest system. With a body harness, maximum arresting force is 1,800 pounds (8 kN); rig the system so the employee can neither free fall more than 6 feet (1.8 m) nor contact any lower level, and stop the employee completely with no more than 3.5 feet (1.07 m) of deceleration distance. (29 CFR 1926.502(d); 29 CFR 1926.502(d)(16)(ii); 29 CFR 1926.502(d)(16)(iii); 29 CFR 1926.502(d)(16)(iv)). Anchorages used for attachment of personal fall arrest equipment shall be independent of any anchorage being used to support or suspend platforms and capable of supporting at least 5,000 pounds (22.2 kN) per employee attached, or shall be designed, installed, and used as part of a complete personal fall arrest system which maintains a safety factor of at least two and under the supervision of a qualified person. (29 CFR 1926.502(d)(15), (d)(15)(i)-(ii)). When stopping a fall, the system must have sufficient strength to withstand twice the potential impact energy of an employee free falling a distance of 6 feet (1.8 m), or the free fall distance permitted by the system, whichever is less. (29 CFR 1926.502(d)(16)(v)).

Positioning: Limit free fall to 2 feet (.6 m); the anchorage must support at least twice the potential impact load of the employee's fall or 3,000 pounds (13.3 kN), whichever is greater. (29 CFR 1926.502(e)(1); 29 CFR 1926.502(e)(2)).

Safety nets: Install nets as close as practicable below the walking/working surface, never more than 30 feet (9.1 m) below it, with sufficient clearance beneath them to prevent contact with the surface or structures below under the specified drop-test impact. (29 CFR 1926.502(c)(1); 29 CFR 1926.502(c)(3)). Nets and their installations must be capable of absorbing an impact force equal to that produced by the specified drop test. (29 CFR 1926.502(c)(4)). Jobsite drop-testing is required after initial installation and before use as fall protection, whenever relocated, after major repair, and at 6-month intervals if left in one place; only when the employer can demonstrate that the required drop-test is unreasonable may the employer or a designated competent person use the pre-use certification alternative described in Section 6.10. (29 CFR 1926.502(c)(4)(i)-(ii)).

Covers: Roadway and vehicular-aisle covers must support, without failure, at least twice the maximum axle load of the largest expected vehicle; all other covers must support, without failure, at least twice the weight of employees, equipment, and materials that may be imposed at one time. Secure covers against accidental displacement and color code them or mark them "HOLE" or "COVER"; the marking provision excludes cast iron manhole covers and steel grates used on streets or roadways. (29 CFR 1926.502(i)(1); 29 CFR 1926.502(i)(2); 29 CFR 1926.502(i)(3); 29 CFR 1926.502(i)(4)).

Where warning lines, controlled access zones, and monitoring may be used: Apply the task-specific limits in Section 6.2 and the following options. See Section 6.12 for warning-line criteria and Section 6.13 for controlled-access-zone and monitoring criteria.

Low-slope roofing options: For roofing work governed by 29 CFR 1926.501(b)(10), a warning line may be combined with a guardrail system, safety net system, personal fall arrest system, or safety monitoring system; on low-slope roofs 50 feet (15.25 m) or less in width, safety monitoring alone is permitted. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(10)). The company roof-width verification policy in Section 6.2 applies to monitoring-only approval.

Leading-edge control-line substitution: For employees on a walking/working surface 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above a lower level where leading edges are under construction, but who are not engaged in that work, if a guardrail system is chosen and a controlled access zone has already been established for leading-edge work, its control line may be used in lieu of a guardrail along the edge that parallels the leading edge. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(2)(ii)).

Overhand bricklaying options: For overhand bricklaying and related work governed by 29 CFR 1926.501(b)(9), a controlled access zone is a permitted option, but reaching more than 10 inches (25 cm) below the working surface requires guardrails, safety nets, or personal fall arrest. (29 CFR 1926.501(b)(9)(i)-(ii)).

Conditional leading-edge plan: The Sec. 1926.502(k) plan option is restricted to the work and infeasibility/greater-hazard demonstration specified in Section 6.14. (29 CFR 1926.502(k)).

Program interpretation - continuous protection: Applying the task-specific duties cited in Section 6.2 together with 29 CFR 1926.502(a)(2), when personal fall arrest is the selected permitted protection, the employee must remain protected throughout the fall-hazard exposure, including transfers between anchorages.

Company policy (exceeds 29 CFR 1926.501(b)): For exposures below the applicable regulatory trigger, maintain 100% tie-off whenever personal fall arrest is selected. This policy does not authorize personal fall arrest where Section 6.2 requires another method.

Company's chosen method: Carlos verifies compatible transfer equipment and suitable anchorages before access; if continuous attachment cannot be maintained, stop and revise the method.