



## **OSHA Tightens Fall Protection Requirements for Residential Builders**

OSHA recently announced a major change in the fall protection requirements for residential builders. By withdrawing a 1995 directive that allowed residential builders to bypass fall protection requirements, OSHA took a stronger stance at protecting workers from falls. The 1995 directive was initially intended as a temporary policy after concerns about the feasibility of fall protection in residential building construction.

To no one's surprise, fall related deaths still remain high in residential construction, and feasibility is no longer a viable excuse or concern. According to the announcement, residential builders have until June 16, 2011 to comply with OSHA Standard 29 CFR 1926.501(b)(13).

Moving forward, residential construction employers will be expected to take the following precautions under OSHA Standard 29 CFR 1926.501(b)(13):

- Employees working six feet or more above lower levels must be protected by conventional fall protection methods (i.e. guardrail systems, safety net systems, or personal fall arrest systems) or alternative fall protection measures allowed by other provisions of 1926.501(b) for particular types of work.
- An example of an alternative fall protection measure allowed under 1926.501(b) is the use of warning lines and safety monitoring systems during low-sloped roof work.
- OSHA allows the use of an effective fall restraint system instead of a personal fall arrest system. An effective fall restraint system must be rigged to prevent a worker from reaching a fall hazard or roof edge. A fall restraint system may consist of a full body harness or body belt. The harness or belt must be connected to an anchor point at the center of a roof by a lanyard of a length that will not allow a worker to reach the edge of the roof.
- When the employer can demonstrate that it is infeasible or creates a greater hazard to use required fall protection systems, a qualified person must develop a written site-specific fall protection plan in accordance with 1926.502(k) that, among other things, specifies the alternative fall protection methods that will be used to protect employees.

To assist builders in meeting these new requirements, OSHA has published a residential fall protection page at [http://osha.gov/doc/residential\\_fall\\_protection.html](http://osha.gov/doc/residential_fall_protection.html)

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