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OSHA Fall Protection Standards Bridge Contractors Must Know

No single standard of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) covers all the fall protection requirements a bridge contractor needs to know. A bridge contractor must be familiar with at least four subparts of OSHA standards. Further, OSHA standards are minimum standards, so knowledge of several standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) covering fall protection is often also required. The table below provides a general overview of the relevant OSHA standards.

OSHA Fall Protection Standards for Bridge Contractors (29 CFR 1926)

OSHA Subpart	Situation	Requirements	OSHA Standards
Subpart E Personal Floatation Device (PFD)	*Working over water where there is a hazard of drowning	All situations require a PFD	1926.106(a)
	*Where a personal fall arrest system (PFAS) is used 100% of the time and no drowning hazard	All situations do not require a PFD	1926.106(a) 1926.501(b)
	*Where safety nets are used for fall protection	All situations require a PFD	1926.106(a)
Subpart L Scaffold Fall Protection Requirements	Scaffolding	10 ft (3.0 m)	1926.451(g)
	Suspended scaffolding of any type	10 ft (3.0 m)	1926.451(g)(1)(i)&(ii)
	Aerial lifts - NOTE: personal fall protection must satisfy criteria in 1926.502(d) & (e)	All situations	1926.453(b)(2)(v)
Subpart M Fall Protection Requirements	**Leading edges on bridge decks	6 ft (1.8 m)	1926.501(b)(2)
	Bridge decks, unprotected sides and edges	6 ft (1.8 m)	1926.501(b)(1)
	Holes/floor (bridge deck) openings 2" and greater	6 ft (1.8 m)	1926.501(b)(4)
	Formwork and reinforcing steel	6 ft (1.8 m)	1926.501(b)(5)
	Ramps, walkways, and runways	6 ft (1.8 m)	1926.501(b)(6)
	Working above dangerous equipment	All situations	1926.501(b)(8)
	**Precast concrete erection	6 ft (1.8 m)	1926.501(b)(12)
Subpart Q Concrete & Masonry Requirements	Impalement hazard (must be guarded)	Any exposure	1926.701(b)(1)
***Subpart R Steel Erection	General Requirements	15 ft (4.6 m)	1926.760(a)(1)
	Connectors	15 ft (4.6 m) to 30 ft (9.2 m)	1926.760(b)
	Controlled Deck Zone	15 ft (4.6 m) to 30 ft (9.2 m)	1926.760(c)
	Fall Protection Systems	Varies	See App. G
	Perimeter Safety Cables	Varies	See App. G

*Working over water see [WWW.OSHA.GOV](http://www.osha.gov) for letter of interpretation dated September 28, 1999 linked to 1926.106(a).

**Leading edge work requires conventional fall protection, unless the employer can demonstrate it is not feasible. Where the employer determines it is not feasible, a site-specific written plan in accordance with 1926.502(k) must be developed, implemented, and supervised by a competent person.

***See OSHA's [WWW.OSHA.GOV](http://www.osha.gov) eTool and Directive CPL 02 01 034 for more detailed information and NIOSH Campaign to Prevent Falls in Construction [WWW.CDC.GOV/NIOSH/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/)

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