MIOSHA Fact Sheet

Residential Fall Protection

Definition of Residential Construction

MIOSHA defines "residential construction" as construction work that satisfies both of the following elements:

- The end-use of the structure being built must be as a home, i.e., a dwelling.
- The structure being built must be constructed using traditional wood frame construction materials and methods. The limited use of structural steel in a predominantly wood-framed home, such as a steel I-beam to help support wood framing, does not disqualify a structure from being considered residential construction. Traditional wood frame construction materials and methods will be characterized by:
  - *Framing materials*: Wood (or equivalent cold-formed sheet metal stud) framing, not steel or concrete; wooden floor joists and roof structures.
  - *Exterior wall structure*: Wood (or equivalent cold-formed sheet metal stud) framing or masonry brick or block.
  - *Methods*: Traditional wood frame construction techniques.

Requirements for Residential Fall Protection Adopted

All residential construction employers must comply with Construction Standard Part 45, Fall Protection (Part 45).

When working on steep roofs, that are six or more feet above a lower level, fall protection such as guard rails, personal fall arrest systems (harnesses and lanyards) or safety nets must be used.

On all other walking/working surfaces, including roofs with a pitch less than 4 in 12 and flat roofs, where the height from one elevation to another is greater than six feet, guardrails, personal fall arrest systems (harnesses and lanyards) or safety nets must be used. However, employers who can demonstrate that these fall protection systems are not feasible, or create a greater hazard, can use a written, site-specific plan outlining alternative fall protection measures that must be followed.

Alternate Fall Protection Plans

The use of fall protection plans is limited to “residential construction” in which the structure will be used as a home and constructed with traditional wood frame materials and methods.

Although the limited use of structural steel in a predominantly wood-framed home, such as a steel I-beam to help support wood framing, does not disqualify a structure from being considered residential construction.

The fall protection plan must be in writing and site-specific. However, a written plan developed for repeated use for a particular model or style of home will be considered site-specific. The fall protection plan must be available at the worksite.

MIOSHA Enforcement Policy

On January 22, 2020, the Construction Safety and Health Division issued a revised Division Instruction CSHD-COM-04-1, Residential Fall Protection Compliance Criteria, as amended, establishing an enforcement policy for fall protection during residential construction activities.

A previous instruction, dated June 25, 2004, allowed employers, engaged in certain residential construction activities, to use specified alternative methods of fall protection (e.g., slide guards or safety monitor systems) rather than conventional fall protection (e.g., guardrails, safety nets, or personal fall arrest systems) without having to prove infeasibility or creating a greater hazard. **This is no longer acceptable.**

Residential construction employers must ensure that employees working six feet or more above lower levels use guardrails, safety nets, or personal fall arrest systems. A personal fall arrest system may consist of a full body harness, a deceleration device, a lanyard, and an anchor point. (See the definition of "personal fall arrest system" in Part 45.)

The use of an effective fall restraint system in lieu of a personal fall arrest system is allowed. To be effective, a fall restraint system must be rigged to prevent a worker from reaching a fall hazard and falling over the edge. A fall restraint system may consist of a full body harness or body belt that is connected to an anchor point by a lanyard of a length that will not allow a worker to physically reach the edge of the roof.

Other fall protection measures may be used to the extent that is allowed under other provisions of Part 45. Rule 1926.501(b) addresses specific types of work. For example, 1926.501(b)(10) permits the use of warning lines and safety monitoring systems during the performance of **roofing work** on low-sloped roofs.

If an employer can demonstrate that the use of conventional fall protection methods is infeasible or creates a greater hazard, they must ensure that a qualified person develops a **written site-specific fall protection plan** in compliance with Rule 1926.502(k), documenting the reasons why conventional fall protection systems are infeasible or why their use would create a greater hazard.

Determining “Infeasibility”

“Infeasible” means that it is **impossible** to perform the construction work using a conventional fall protection system or that it is technologically impossible to use any one of these systems to provide fall protection.

It is presumed that it is feasible to use fall protection and that it will not create a greater hazard for residential employers to implement conventional fall protection. Fall protection systems are consistently improving and are available for almost every construction activity.

Employers are encouraged to contact the MIOSHA Construction Safety and Health Division at 517-284-7680 if they have questions regarding jobsite health and safety or compliance issues. The MIOSHA Consultation Education and Training (CET) Division provides training and onsite audit services for residential and commercial builders at the employer’s request, free of charge. The CET Division can be contacted directly at www.michigan.gov/cetrca, or at 517-284-7720.