

OHS Fall Protection Requirements – Know the Laws of Your Province



A. WHEN FALL PROTECTION IS REQUIRED

OHS regulations specify when fall protection to workers working at heights is required based on:

- How high up they are (typically 3 metres or higher);
- The surface or platform they work on (e.g., vehicles, scaffolds, sloped rooves); and
- What they're at risk of falling through, on or into (e.g., machinery, hard surfaces, water).

But while the approach is the same, specific criteria vary by location.

FEDERAL

- On unguarded structure or vehicle > 3 m or more above nearest safe level
- On ladder > 3 m or more above nearest permanent safe level where worker can't use at least one hand to hold ladder
- at a height of less than 3 m if surface on which person might fall presents greater risk of injury than a solid,

flat surface (COHS Regs, Sec. 12.07(1))

ALBERTA

- A vertical distance of 3 m or more
- A vertical distance of less than 3 metres if there is an unusual possibility of injury, i.e., if the injury may be worse than an injury from landing on a solid, flat surface
- Into or onto a hazardous substance or object
- Through an opening in a work surface, or
- At a permanent work area, a vertical distance of more than 1.2 metres and less than 3 metres (OHS Code, Sec. 139(1))

BRITISH COLUMBIA

- Where they risk falling 3 m or more
- Where they risk falling < 3 m but risk of injury is greater than risk of injury from impact on flat surface (OHS Reg., Sec. 11.2(1))

MANITOBA

Where they risk falling:

- 3 m or more
- < 3 m but risk of injury is greater due to surface or item they may land on
- Into operating machines or moving parts
- Into water or other liquids
- Into or onto a hazardous substance or object
- Thru an opening on a work surface
- >1.2 m from area used as path for wheelbarrows or similar equipment
(Workplace Safety & Health Regs., Sec. 14.1(1))

NEW BRUNSWICK

Where they risk falling from:

From unguarded work area that's:

- i. 3 m or more above water or nearest permanent safe level
- ii. Above surface or thing that may cause injury hurt on contact
- iii. Above any open top tank, bin, hopper pit or vat
 - From a work area platform 3 m or more above permanent safe level and from which they may fall if the area platform tips or fails
 - Communication or power transmission tower or similar structure 3 m or more-high
 - From In a work area that a govt OHS officer determines official says requires a fall-arrest use of a fall protection system
 - From a communication or power transmission tower or similar structure 3 m or more high
(OHS General Regs., Secs. 49(1) + (2))

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

- 3 m or more above nearest safe surface or water
- Above surface or thing that could cause injury were worker to fall on it
- Above open tank, pit or vat containing hazardous material

NOVA SCOTIA

- 3 m or more above nearest safe surface or water
- Less than 3 m when the work area is above one of the following:

- i. a surface or thing that could cause injury to the person on contact that's worse than an injury from landing on a solid, flat surface
- ii. exposed hazardous material, such as in an open tank, pit or vat
- Fall protection required only if reasonably practicable if work if work must be performed on or from a vehicle, rail car or other mobile equipment
(Workplace Health Safety Regs., Secs. 21.2(1) + (4))

ONTARIO

GENERAL INDUSTRY

Where they risk falling 3 m or more
(Ind. Est. Regs., Sec. 85)

CONSTRUCTION

Where they risk falling:

- > 3 m
- > 1.2 m if work area used as path for wheelbarrows or similar equipment
- Into operating machinery
- Into water or another liquid
- Into or onto a hazardous substance or object
- Through an opening on work surface (Const. Proj. Regs., Sec. 26);
- When getting on or off suspended platform, suspended scaffold or boatswain's chair (Const. Proj. Regs., Sec. 141(1))

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

- 3 m or more above nearest safe surface or water
- Above surface or thing that could cause injury were worker to fall on it

- Above open tank, pit or vat containing hazardous material

(Fall Prot. Regs., Sec. 2(1))

QUÉBEC

GENERAL INDUSTRY

Where they risk falling:

- >3 m (unless they're just using some means of egress or ingress)
- Into a liquid or dangerous substance
- On a moving component
- On equipment or material that constitute a danger
- From a height of 1,5 m or more in a well, basin, tank, reservoir, a vat, container for the storing or mixing of substances, or where the workers are handling a load (OHS Regs., Sec. 33.1)

CONSTRUCTION

- Where they risk falls of >3 m

Where they risk falling:

- i. Into dangerous liquid or substances
- ii. Onto moving components
- iii. Onto dangerous equipment or material
- iv. From 1.2 m or more when using a wheelbarrow or vehicle (Safety Code for Const. Ind., Sec. 2.9.1.)

SASKATCHEWAN

Where they risk falls of:

- 3 m or more
- < 3 m but there's a chance of injury

(OHS Regs., Sec. 9-2(2))

NORHTWEST TERRITORIES & NUNAVUT

Where they risk falls of:

- 3 m or more
- < 3 m but there's a chance of injury

(OHS Regs., Sec. 119(1))

YUKON

- Where they risk falls of 3 m or more
- Where they risk falls of <3 m but there's unusual risk of injury
- Where there's a possibility of falling into a pit, shaft, machinery, water or bulk material that could shift
- When climbing or descending from utility poles, communication and transmission towers or single point suspension equipment
- When working on a swing stage or thrust out scaffold, elevating work platform or basket or suspended platform or cage
- When barring or scaling loose material from a wall in an open pit or an earth work, or

When working on a roof:

- i. with a slope of 2 vertical to 3 horizontal or steeper, or
- ii. where the surface is slippery (WSC Regs., Sec. 1.37)

B. MAXIMUM FALL ARREST FREE FALL DISTANCES & ARRESTING FORCES

Fall arrest systems don't prevent falls but stop them before a

worker plunges too far. But the action of arresting a fall can put a lot of stress on the body creating physical shock that can injure or even kill the worker. Accordingly, fall arrest systems are subject to stricter design, use and installation requirements including with regard to:

- How far they can let a worker fall before arresting it; and
- How much force they can exert on the worker's body in arresting the fall.

Jurisdiction	Maximum Free Fall Distance (assuming no shock absorber used)	Maximum Arresting Force (in kiloNewtons (kN))
Federal	As specified by CSA Z259.2.4-2.5	As specified by CSA Z259.2.4-2.5
Alberta	1.2 metres	6kN (8 kN if worker is using E6 shock absorber in accordance with manufacturer's instructions)
British Columbia	1.2 metres	As specified by manufacturer
Manitoba	1.2 metres	8 kN
New Brunswick	1.2 metres	8 kN
Newfoundland & Labrador	1.22 metres	1.22 metres
Nova Scotia	1.22 metres	8 kN
Ontario	GENERAL INDUSTRY 1.5 metres CONSTRUCTION 0.6 metres	GENERAL INDUSTRY 8 kN CONSTRUCTION 8 kN

Jurisdiction	Maximum Free Fall Distance (assuming no shock absorber used)	Maximum Arresting Force (in kiloNewtons (kN))
Prince Edward Island	1.22 metres	4 kN (where system isn't equipped with a shock absorber)
Québec	GENERAL INDUSTRY Not specified CONSTRUCTION 1.8 metres	GENERAL INDUSTRY Not specified CONSTRUCTION As specified in CSA standard applicable to equipment used6 kN
Saskatchewan	*if no shock absorber: 1.2 metres *if shock absorber is used: 2 metres or distance specified by manufacturer	8 kN
Northwest Territories & Nunavut	*if no shock absorber: 1.2 metres *if shock absorber is used: 2 metres or distance specified by manufacturer	8 kN
Yukon	1.2 metres	As specified in CSA standard applicable to equipment used

C. WHERE & WHEN A FALL PROTECTION PROGRAM IS REQUIRED

All but 3 jurisdictions—Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec—require employers to codify their fall protection measures into a written document called a fall protection program or plan.

Here's a look at where fall protection programs are required and under which circumstances.

Jurisdiction	Fall Protection Program Mandatory When:
Federal	Workers are at risk of falling from: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An unguarded structure or vehicle > 3 m or more above nearest safe level• A ladder > 3 m or more above nearest permanent safe level where worker can't use at least one hand to hold ladder• A height of less than 3 m if surface on which person might fall presents greater risk of injury than a solid, flat surface
Alberta	Workers are at risk of falling 3 or more metres AND there are no guardrails
British Columbia	Workers are at* Work is done at location where there's a risk of falling 7.5 metres or more metres and AND workers aren't protected by permanent guardrails OR <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using a fall arrest system or rope system isn't practicable or will cause an even greater hazard than if such a system was used and, as a result, the employer ensures that work procedures are followed that minimize risk of injury and are acceptable to the Board instead or fall arrest systems are not practicable
Manitoba	Fall protection plan not specifically required

New Brunswick	Code of practice required when fall protection is required (See A above), and one of the following 3 things is true: i. Workers are working at height of 7.5 metres or more ii. Employer uses a safety monitor and work procedures when weatherproofing as means of fall protection iii. A government OHS officer determines that requires a written code of practice is necessary to ensure safety at the particular work site
Newfoundland & Labrador	Employers use a fall arrest system or safety net as a means of fall protection
Nova Scotia	Fall protection is required and maximum fall distance is less than 7.5 metres or more (if the maximum fall distance is < 7.5 metres, only a fall protection safe work procedure is required)
Ontario	Not specifically required
Prince Edward Island	Fall arrest systems or personnel safety nets are used as a means of fall protection
Québec	Not specifically required
Saskatchewan	Workers are at risk of falling 3 or more metres AND there are no guardrails or similar barriers in place
Northwest Territories & Nunavut	Workers are at risk of falling 3 or more metres AND there are no guardrails or similar barriers in place
Yukon	Workers are at risk of falling 7.5 or more metres AND there are no guardrails