Fall Protection Plan

SOP · US · Updated 2026-07-13 · Square brackets are placeholders to replace with your own details.

A fall protection plan is the written procedure for keeping people from falling when they work at height: where the fall hazards are on this site, which protection system covers each — guardrails, safety nets, or personal fall arrest — how ladders are used, and how a worker hanging in a harness gets rescued. Falls are the leading cause of death in construction, and the plan is the difference between fall protection as equipment and fall protection as a system.

The predictable failure is not the missing harness — it is the harness with nothing to clip to, the anchor chosen at height under schedule pressure, the guardrail removed for a delivery and never replaced, and the rescue plan that consists of calling 911 and hoping. This plan closes those gaps on paper, before the crew is on the roof.

This template gives you the full plan: roles including the competent person, hazard identification, system selection in the right order, the daily working-at-height procedure, ladder rules, the rescue plan, and training and records.

Purpose and scope

This plan sets out how [Your company] protects workers from falls at [site/project], covering work at or above [trigger height per the applicable OSHA standard], work near unprotected edges, holes, and openings, and ladder use. It applies to all [Your company] employees and subcontractors on the project.

The order of preference is fixed: eliminate the exposure by doing the work at ground level or by sequencing it out, then protect everyone at once with guardrails or nets, and only then rely on personal fall arrest — the system that depends on each individual doing everything right, every time.

Roles and responsibilities

- Competent person ([name/role]): identifies fall hazards on this site, selects the systems and anchor points, inspects equipment and installations, has authority to stop work, and owns this plan day to day.
- Site supervisor ([name/role]): schedules work so protection is installed before exposure, enforces this plan on everyone including visitors and other trades, and reports every fall, arrest, and near miss.
- Workers: inspect their own equipment before each use, tie off where the plan requires, keep guardrails and covers in place, and stop and ask the competent person when the plan does not fit the task in front of them.
- Qualified person ([name/role/engineer]): designs or approves anchorages and any engineered systems where the standard requires it.

Identifying fall hazards on this site

- Unprotected edges: roof edges, floor perimeters, mezzanines, loading docks — [list locations].

- Holes and openings: floor holes, skylights, shafts, window openings — every one covered or guarded, and every cover secured, marked, and strong enough for the traffic over it.
- Leading edges and work surfaces under construction: [phases/areas].
- Ladders, scaffolds, and elevated platforms in use: [list].
- Fragile surfaces and weather: skylights and untested roof decks are treated as holes; wind, ice, and wet surfaces raise the bar or stop the work — the competent person decides.
- The hazard list is walked and updated [daily/each phase] as the structure and the exposures change.

Choosing the system

- Guardrail systems: the default for edges, platforms, and holes — they protect everyone without action on their part. Built or installed to the applicable OSHA specification, inspected by the competent person, and if a section is removed for work or loading, the exposed area is controlled and the rail goes back before the task ends.
- Safety net systems: for leading-edge and structural work where rails are infeasible — installed as close beneath the work surface as the standard allows and inspected per its requirements.
- Personal fall arrest systems (PFAS): full-body harness, connector, and anchorage selected per the standard and the manufacturer — used only where the plan names the anchor points, with fall clearance calculated by the competent person before work, not estimated at height.
- Positioning, restraint, and other systems are used where the plan specifies; body belts are not used for fall arrest.
- For every task at height, the plan's task list at [location] records the system chosen and why the higher-preference options were infeasible.

Working at height — daily procedure

1. Before work starts, the competent person walks the area, confirms the protection for each task on today's plan, and briefs the crew: hazards, systems, anchor points, and the rescue plan.
2. Verify guardrails, covers, and nets are in place and undamaged — report and fix gaps before anyone is exposed, not after.
3. Each PFAS user inspects their harness and lanyard before use: webbing for cuts, burns, and chemical damage; stitching; D-rings; hooks and gates. Defective gear is tagged out of service on the spot.
4. Don the harness and have fit checked [by buddy/competent person]: snug straps, D-ring positioned per the manufacturer, no dangling slack.
5. Connect only to the anchor points the plan designates for the task — never to guardrails, conduit, or whatever is handy — and confirm fall clearance below has been calculated for this location.
6. Remain tied off through the exposure, including transit between anchor points [per the plan's method: twin-leg lanyard/horizontal lifeline].
7. Keep the area below controlled: barricade or monitor the drop zone, and secure tools against falling [tethers/toe boards/debris nets].
8.

Stop work and call the competent person when conditions change — wind, ice, a missing rail, a task the plan does not cover. The plan is amended before the work resumes.

9. At the end of the task, restore all rails and covers, stow equipment clean and dry, and report any wear, near miss, or arrest to the competent person.
10. Any equipment that has arrested a fall is removed from service immediately and does not return until [inspection/replacement per the manufacturer and standard].

Ladder safety

- Right ladder, right job: rated for the load, tall enough that nobody stands above the marked highest standing level, fiberglass near electrical work.
- Inspect before use — rails, rungs, feet, locks — and tag damaged ladders out of service immediately.
- Set up on firm, level ground; extension ladders at the proper angle per the markings, secured [top tie-off/footing], extending above the landing per the applicable rule.
- Three points of contact going up and down, facing the ladder, tools raised by [line/hoist/belt] — not carried in hands.
- Keep your belt buckle between the rails — reposition the ladder instead of reaching — and never move a ladder with anyone on it.

Rescue plan

1. The pre-work briefing names the rescue method for each PFAS task before exposure starts — a worker suspended after an arrest needs rescue promptly, and "call 911" alone is not a plan; suspension in a harness is itself a medical emergency.
2. Primary method: self-rescue or assisted rescue via [aerial lift/ladder/rescue kit at [location]] by [trained persons on site].
3. The rescue equipment for the day's method is on site, checked, and reachable before the first tie-off.
4. On any arrest: the supervisor calls 911, the rescue-trained crew executes the named method, and nobody improvises a second casualty.
5. The rescued worker is medically assessed even if they feel fine, the equipment comes out of service, and the event is reported and investigated under the injury reporting procedure the same day.

Training and records

Every worker exposed to fall hazards is trained by a competent person, as the federal construction standard requires, before exposure: recognizing the hazards on this site, the systems in this plan and their limits, PFAS inspection, donning, and anchorage, ladder rules, and the rescue plan. Retraining follows any change of systems, any inadequacy shown in the field, and any fall or near miss.

Training certifications, equipment inspection logs, the task/system list, and plan amendments are kept at [system/location]. This plan is reviewed [each phase/frequency], after every arrest or near miss, and when the structure or methods change. Owner: [competent person]. Next review due: [date].

How to use this template

1. Fill in the trigger height and system specifications from the OSHA standard that covers your work — construction and general industry differ, and your state plan may be stricter.
2. Name your competent person and make the authority real: they can stop work, and the schedule bends to protection, not the reverse.
3. Walk the site and build the task list — every task at height, its system, and its anchor points — before the first crew is exposed.
4. Buy or stage the rescue equipment your named method needs; a rescue plan that lists equipment you do not own is theater.
5. Train the crew on this plan and the site's actual anchors, and keep the certifications with the plan.
6. Re-walk the hazard list at each phase change — the building you planned for stops existing as it gets built.

Official guidance

- OSHA — Fall protection
- OSHA — Fall protection in construction (29 CFR 1926.501)
- OSHA — Stop falls: stand-down and resources