

# Tarpping and fall protection – information for truckers

OAR 437 - Division 2/I



## Fall hazards and tarping

The safest tarping method is one that keeps you off the load and eliminates any chance of you falling, such as beam and trolley tarping systems and automated tarping systems. However, when such tarping systems are not available when you need to adjust, remove, or apply a tarp from or near the top of a load, be sure to protect yourself from falling whenever possible.

If you have to adjust, remove, or apply a tarp from the top of your load, be sure to protect yourself from falling. Use an appropriate fall protection system when you are:

- Working more than 10 feet above a lower level
- Working above dangerous equipment

## What is an appropriate fall protection system?

Examples include access platforms with standard guardrails and horizontal lifeline systems with the appropriate personal fall-arrest or restraint equipment you need to use with the system. These systems will protect you when you are receiving or delivering a tarped load.

## Protecting yourself at your employer's facility and at host employers' facilities

Your employer, and generally any fixed-site host employer you deliver to or from, must ensure you are provided a safe means and method to tarp and untarp loads using the "hierarchy of controls." A control that fully eliminates the fall hazard is better than one that does not. When the fall hazard cannot be eliminated or guarded with engineering controls, your employer must provide you personal fall protection equipment and train you on how to safely use it whenever possible. This is consistent with Oregon OSHA's [multiemployer workplace guidelines](#).

## Protecting yourself when you are on the road

It may be difficult or impossible to use a tarping system or fall protection when you are on the road. Your employer is responsible for determining if a tarping system or a fall protection system is feasible. Situations when fall protection may not be possible include:

- Roadside inspections
- Roadside repairs
- Service work
- Construction sites

Use safe work practices when fall protection systems and tarping systems are not feasible.

## Tarpping safe practices

If you need to get on the load to adjust, remove, or apply a tarp:

- Wear nonskid shoes and safety glasses.
- Use a ladder to safely work from whenever possible and for safe access or egress. [Review best practices](#) for portable ladders.
- Do not lift with your back when handling the tarp.
- Look for gaps and cracks on the top of the load so you do not trip over them when you are unrolling the tarp.
- Stay as close to the centerline of the load as possible when you are unrolling the tarp and crawl over the tarp, rather than walk on top of it.



Tarpping a chip van. Photo: Virginia Cooperative Extension

- Make sure the tie-downs are not worn or damaged before installing the tarp.
- Roll tarps properly when you put them away. A loosely rolled tarp is hard to handle.

When possible:

- Go to a truck stop or another safe area – do not just pull to the side of the road.
- Position and unroll the tarp from the end of the load. This will allow you to push the tarp while unrolling.
- Get a forklift operator to load your tarps for you. Do not stand or pass under the elevated portion of a forklift, whether loaded or empty.
- Avoid tarping activities from the top of the load during high wind conditions.

### More information

- ✎ [Oregon rules for fall protection](#), Subdivision 2/I, 437-002-0134(5)(a)
- ✎ Letter of interpretation: [Fall protection for drivers working on top of loaded chip trailers](#)
- ✎ Letter of interpretation: [Fall protection and vehicle maintenance](#)
- ✎ Program directive: [Multiemployer workplace citation guidelines](#)



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### Workers

Your employer cannot retaliate against you for reporting a workplace health or safety concern or violation. For more information about your rights, visit the Oregon OSHA website.

*The Technical Section of Oregon OSHA produced this fact sheet to highlight health and safety programs and rules. The information is intended to explain the rules and provide best practices to employers.*