



Hazard alert

Catch platforms in construction and general industry

Catch platforms are not fall protection

Falls from heights to lower levels continue to cause more serious injuries, lifelong disabilities, and fatalities than any other workplace hazard. Providing fall protection and ensuring its use according to Oregon OSHA's rules for fall protection can mean the difference between life and death. This means providing fall protection systems recognized within Oregon OSHA's requirements and ensuring they are properly installed and used by employees.

The following fall protection methods are established in Oregon OSHA's construction and general industry rules and may be appropriate based on your jobsite-specific conditions when allowed by rule: guardrails, safety nets, personal fall arrest systems, positioning systems, personal fall restraint systems, warning-line systems, safety monitoring systems, and covers.

Why catch platforms are not recognized

Oregon OSHA does not recognize catch platforms as a method of fall protection in any construction or general industry setting. While some construction or general industry employers may use catch platforms to reduce the distance an employee might fall, this approach does not eliminate the hazard of falling and may expose employees – as well as others – to additional hazards. Other than a single reference regarding “falling object protection” to address the hazards of falling hand

tools, debris, and other small objects in the scaffolding regulations, a construction or general industry employer will not find reference to “catch platforms” within Oregon OSHA Division 2 or Division 3 standards.

Catch platforms for fall protection are not included in the options for protecting employees from the hazard of falling because falls are not planned or controlled events in the workplace. The impact forces experienced by a worker who falls from a height to a lower level – as well as the impact forces transmitted to the platform used to “catch” the person – are difficult to plan for and predict. Catch platforms do not incorporate any type of energy-absorbing safety system designed to reduce the potential for impact-force injuries, such as the deceleration devices incorporated into personal fall arrest systems that are tested to dissipate and limit the arresting forces experienced by the body after a fall.

When catch platforms are used, how are they regulated?

Catch platforms used in construction or general industry to catch employees who might fall from a walking-working surface above or for falling object protection are regulated by Oregon OSHA's Division 3, Subdivision L, Scaffolding regulations as a scaffold. Scaffolds used as catch platforms must meet all applicable requirements before they can be used to support employees or materials, or catch employees or materials.

Criteria for scaffolds used as catch platforms

During a fall, both horizontal and vertical impact loads (forces) are applied on the scaffold used as a catch platform. All scaffolds must be designed and constructed to support the loads that will be imposed on them as workers and their materials use them. A worker falling from height onto a supported scaffold (catch platform) will apply significantly higher impact forces than the loads applied by only walking or working on, or from, the scaffold.

A scaffold (catch platform) must be able to support its own weight and at least four times the maximum intended load applied or transmitted to it. The maximum intended load includes the total load of all people, equipment, tools, materials, transmitted loads, and other loads reasonably anticipated to be applied to a scaffold or scaffold component at any one time. Supported scaffold poles, legs, posts, frames, and uprights must be supported by base plates and mud sills or other adequate firm foundation. Furthermore, bracing or tying the catch platform back into the structure may be necessary.

When using manufactured scaffolding systems or components as a catch platform, never exceed the scaffold's capacity and always follow the manufacturer's instructions regarding proper use, setup, inspection, maintenance, and replacement. Consult with a structural engineer to understand the necessary strength criteria, as well as a mechanical engineer who can evaluate the horizontal and vertical forces that must be overcome to ensure the catch platform will not collapse or tip over when impacted. Ensure that any evaluation is provided in writing and considers site-specific conditions where the platform is used to catch employees, materials, or both.

Scaffolds and scaffold components must be inspected by a competent person before each work shift and after any event that could affect the structural integrity. Employees who perform work on or above a scaffold used as a catch platform must be trained according to scaffold training regulations.

More information

- ✦ Division 2, Subdivision D, 1910.27, [Scaffold and rope descent systems](#)
- ✦ Division 2, Subdivision D, 1910.28, [Duty to have fall protection and falling object protection](#)
- ✦ Division 2, Subdivision I, 1910.140, [Personal Fall Protection Systems](#)
- ✦ [Division 3, Subdivision L, Scaffolding](#)
- ✦ [Division 3, Subdivision M, Fall Protection](#)
- ✦ [Federal OSHA Fall protection requirements for a walking/working surface above a catch platform with a guardrail system](#)
- ✦ [Federal OSHA: Catch platforms must comply with 29 CFR Subpart L – Jan. 5, 2009](#)



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