SUBJECT: Guardrail Height in General Industry

AFFECTED STANDARDS/DIRECTIVES: 1910.29(b)

PURPOSE: This instruction provides guidance for the equitable enforcement of 1910.29(b) as it pertains to the acceptable height of guardrails.

BACKGROUND: A Field Information Memorandum #74-87 (FIM) was previously issued regarding the height of guardrails. FIM's were reissued and converted to OSHA #100 Series Program Directives. The Walking-Working Surfaces Division 2/D rule is effective in Oregon as of Nov. 1, 2017.

A. The stipulations set forth herein provide for compatible specifications between ANSI, the NFPA, and OSHA, regarding the acceptable height of guardrails in workplaces.


ACTION: Compliance officers must classify technical violations of 1910.29(b) in accordance with Oregon OSHA probability and severity guidelines.

A. Existing guardrails must consist of a top rail, intermediate rail, and posts, or equivalent, and must have a minimum vertical height of 39 inches to 45 inches (42 inches nominal) from the upper surface of the top rail to the walking-working surface.

B. Guardrails with heights greater than 45 inches are permissible provided the extra height does not create a dangerous situation for employees. Openings beneath the top rail that would permit the passage of a 19 inch or larger spherical object would create an unsafe condition; therefore, additional mid-rails may be necessary.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This directive is effective immediately and will remain in effect until canceled or superseded.