



Commercial Fishing

Fall Protection Safety Fact Sheet



Working on commercial fishing vessels presents unique fall hazards to workers. Both OSHA and the U.S. Coast Guard have regulations that apply to activities in the fishing industry. These activities include the maintenance, cleaning, repair, alteration, or overhaul of vessels occurring at sea, dockside, or in a shipyard. Each year, dozens of fishermen are injured or killed due to falls on vessels while performing these activities.

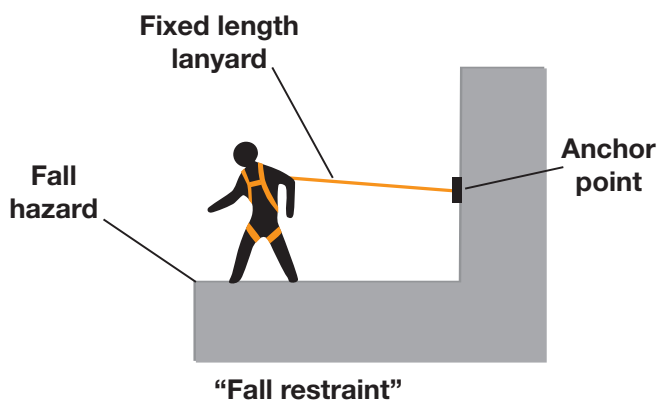
Generally, anything relating to the harvesting of fish or the normal operation of a vessel is governed by the U.S. Coast Guard. However, OSHA regulates activities that are covered under the general industry (29 CFR Part 1910) and shipyard employment (29 CFR Part 1915) standards within three nautical miles of the coast line, except for the Gulf coast of Florida, Texas, and Puerto Rico, where the territorial waters extend for approximately nine nautical miles. States with OSHA-approved State Plans may also regulate shore-side activities related to the fishing industry. For a detailed discussion on OSHA regulations that apply during specific work activities, see Appendices A and B of OSHA Directive, CPL 02-01-047, February 22, 2010.

Work Practices on Vessels that Commonly Require Fall Protection

- Painting outside vessel rails
- Welding on the outside of a vessel's hull
- Work on gantries or masts
- Work on fishing gear (stacks of pots)

Fall Protection and Prevention Methods

Fall protection is required when working more than 5 feet above a solid surface or any distance above water (See 29 CFR 1915.71(j)



Safe Fall Protection Practices

- Use proper equipment, not body belts or ropes around the waist.
- Identify all fall hazards and, where possible, use handrails, chains, and ropes to protect against hazards such as unprotected deck openings/edges and stairwells to eliminate fall hazards.
- Establish a proper gangway or ladder to board vessels.
- Practice good housekeeping. Keep equipment such as cords and fishing lines out of walkways and work areas.
- Do not use cranes to hoist workers unless the crane is specifically approved for lifting personnel.

and 1915.77(c)). For example, when working on scaffolding, staging, runways, or working platforms that are at a height of five feet or more, edges must be guarded with handrails, chains, or ropes. These must be between 42 to 45 inches high and have a midrail located halfway between the upper rail and the working surface (29 CFR 1915.71(j)(1)). Where necessary to prevent objects from falling on workers below, a standard 4-inch toeboard must also be provided (29 CFR 1915.71(j)(5)). When handrails, chains, and ropes cannot be used, a fall restraint or fall arrest system must be used. Safety belts and body belts are not allowed to be used as part of a fall arrest system (29 CFR 1915.159).

Fall Restraint System—A fall restraint system is recommended when guardrails or personal lift devices cannot be used. When properly used, a fall restraint system prevents the worker from falling off an edge. Lanyards must be of fixed length to prevent the worker from reaching an area where they could fall.

Fall Arrest System—When a fall restraint system cannot be installed, a fall arrest system must be used (29 CFR 1915.71(j)(3) and 1915.77(c)). A fall arrest system does not prevent a fall, but instead it is designed to catch the worker with minimal injury.

The components of a fall arrest system are as follows:

- Connecting means (e.g., snap hooks)
- Shock-absorbing lanyard, self-retracting lanyards and lifelines
- Full body harness
- Anchor point (e.g., fixed railing, ship's mast) capable of supporting at least 5,000 lbs. per worker.

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Proper Care and Use of Fall Protection Equipment

- Inspect fall protection equipment for damage or wear before and after each use. If any damage is found, replace the damaged equipment.
- When tying off, ensure that the structure used for support can hold a minimum load of 5,000 lbs.
- Be sure to rig fall arrest equipment so that workers cannot fall more than 6 feet or contact the surface below.

When Using Ladders

- **Secure and stabilize all ladders before climbing them.**
- **Never stand on the top two rungs/steps of a portable ladder.**
- **Face the ladder when climbing and always grasp it with at least one hand.**
- **Maintain ladders free of oil, grease and other slipping hazards.**

Methods for Protecting Workers from Fall Hazards

Open Hatches are hazardous when not protected. Hatches that are not already protected by coamings at a height of 24 inches, must be guarded (e.g., handrails) at a height of 36 to 42 inches, unless the work being done (e.g., filling fish storage holds) prevents this (29 CFR 19 15.73(c)).



Edges of decks, platforms, flats, scaffolding, staging, runways, and similar flat surfaces that are more than 5 feet above a solid surface must be guarded with guardrails that meet the requirements of 29 CFR 1915.71(j)(1) and (2), unless the work being done (e.g., deploying or stacking crab pots) or physical conditions prevent this (29 CFR 1915.73(d)).



Boarding a Vessel from the Dock—Use a gangway with at least 20 inches of walking surface. It must be able to carry the anticipated load and be safely maintained and secured. If the use of a gangway is not possible, a straight ladder, extending at least 36 inches above the upper landing surface and secured to prevent shifting or slipping, must be used. When neither a gangway nor a straight ladder can be used, a Jacob's ladder consisting of double rung or flat tread may be used (29 CFR 1915.74(a)(1)).

For assistance, contact us. We can help. It's confidential.



This fact sheet is not a standard or regulation, and it creates no new legal obligations. It contains recommendations as well as descriptions of mandatory safety and health standards. The recommendations are advisory in nature, informational in content, and are intended to assist employers in providing a safe and healthful workplace. The Occupational Safety and Health Act requires employers to comply with safety and health standards and regulations promulgated by OSHA or by a state with an OSHA-approved State Plan. In addition, the Act's General Duty Clause, Section 5(a)(1), requires employers to provide their employees with a workplace free from recognized hazards likely to cause death or serious physical harm. This information will be made available to sensory-impaired individuals upon request. The voice phone is (202) 693-1999; teletypewriter (TTY) number: (877) 889-5627.

