

Special
Pullout!

Fall protection: What to use when

When you think about staying safe while working at heights, you probably think of wearing your harness and tying off. In other words, you probably think of a fall-arrest system.

Fall arrest is certainly an effective method of protecting you and your workers from falls, but it's not the only one. In fact, using a fall-arrest system should be your last resort.

As you know, there are several different ways you can protect yourself and your workers from falls. Guardrails, floor-opening covers, travel-restraint systems, and fall-arrest systems are the most common. Here are some key points to help you choose the best method for your job.

Guardrails

Guardrails should be your first choice when it comes to preventing falls. They provide workers with the best

protection because, when erected properly, they actually eliminate the fall hazard. With guardrails in place, workers can't fall because there is no open edge.

Another reason guardrails are the preferred method of fall protection is that they protect all workers that come into the area. Protection is not dependant on each worker remembering to tie off, as is the case with fall-arrest or travel-restraint systems. Once guardrails are up, workers can move freely through the work area as though they were on the ground with no risk of falling.

From time to time, you may have to remove some guardrails to allow for material delivery or access to certain equipment. Remind your workers that before guardrails are removed, they must all be protected by another form of fall protection (e.g., a fall-arrest system). As soon as it's possible, put the guardrails back in place.

Opening covers

A significant number of the workers who are injured by a fall, fall through an opening in a roof or floor rather than off the edge of a structure. That is why floor-opening covers are so important.

Here too, guardrails are still your best option. Ideally, you should build guardrails around all floor openings. However, we know that's not always possible. Depending on the size and position of the opening, you may need to use a floor-opening cover in place of guardrails.

If this is the case, the cover must completely cover the opening and be

- securely fastened
- adequately identified as an opening cover
- made from material that is strong enough to support all loads to which it may be subjected

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Don't let this be the last picture someone takes of you.

Use guardrails. Tie off. Get trained on fall protection.



Register for IHSA's *Working at Heights* training program.
Call 1-800-781-2726 or visit www.ihsa.ca

IHSA courses on safety at heights

Working at Heights— Fundamentals of Fall Prevention

“I believe that this program has the potential to become the ‘gold standard’ for basic fall-prevention training in this province.”

– Peter Fonseca, Ontario’s Minister of Labour

If your workers face fall hazards, you’re required to provide them with fall-protection training. Taught by IHSA experts, this full-day program explains the essentials of fall protection in the construction, electrical, utilities, and transportation industries. The course involves classroom instruction and hands-on exposure to some common equipment.

It replaces IHSA’s previous four-hour *Basics of Fall Protection* course and training kit. (Employers still have to provide application- and equipment-specific training.)

Price: \$100 for members*, \$320 for non-members.

Suspended Access Equipment

Taught by IHSA experts, this three-day program teaches participants how to recognize, select, and install

- suspended access equipment
- support systems
- fall protection.

It’s the right course for workers and supervisors who rig and install such equipment.

Price: \$150 for members*, \$960 for non-members.

Courses are already filling up. Register by calling
1-800-781-2726 or visit **www.ihsa.ca**

* You’re automatically a member if you or your company pays WSIB premiums in one of the rate groups covering the construction, transportation, electrical, utilities, aggregates, natural-gas-pipelines, or ready-mix-concrete industries.



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- capable of supporting a live load of at least 2.4 kilonewtons per square metre without exceeding the allowable unit stresses for the material used.

When you label opening covers, make it stand out. Use brightly coloured paint and make the wording clear. It should say

“
DANGER!
FLOOR OPENING - DO NOT REMOVE! DO NOT LOAD!
”

Skylights

Remind your workers to be careful around skylights. Before the skylight has been installed, you should treat the skylight opening the same as all other roof or floor openings (i.e., use guardrails or an opening cover). Once

the skylight has been installed, there may be a perception among workers that it is safe to walk on. Skylights, however, are weak and a worker could easily break them and fall through. To be safe, treat skylights as roof openings and build guardrails around them—even after the skylight has been installed.

Fall-arrest and travel-restraint systems

If you can't use guardrails or opening covers, fall-arrest and travel-restraint systems are your next best option. Most of you have probably used a standard fall-arrest system before with a tied-off lifeline attached to an anchor, but you may not be as familiar with travel-restraint. In many cases, travel restraint may be the better option over fall-arrest. Here's why.

A fall-arrest system prevents you from hitting the ground if you fall. In contrast, a travel-restraint system restrains you so that you *can't* fall.

With travel restraint, the lifeline is measured to be just long enough to allow you to reach the edge of a work area, but not long enough to let you go over.

Despite this big difference, travel-restraint systems are still similar to fall-arrest systems. They both use the same equipment: CSA-approved full body harness, lanyard, and lifeline rope. Plus, both types of systems require you to tie off to an anchor point.

Both fall arrest and travel restraint are forms of personal fall protection—they protect only one person from the fall hazard. A guardrail, as mentioned earlier, protects everyone who is working in the area from the hazard.

For more information about how to protect yourself from fall hazards, visit www.ihsa.ca 