

Safeguarding

One of the most important aspects of preventing a fall, is the equipment or safeguards you select. Where there is a risk of falling, an employer must always look for ways to eliminate the risk of an injury from a fall. An effective way of reducing falls is to use safeguards such as guardrails.

Guardrails allow workers to shed the sometimes cumbersome fall arrest equipment and work freely within the area.

An employer or contractor shall ensure that workers use a fall protection system at a temporary or permanent work area where:

- a worker may fall three meters or more, or
- there is a possibility of injury if a worker falls less than three meters.

Guardrail Requirements

- The minimum height of the guardrail has to be 920mm and the maximum height is 1070mm (above the working surface)
- Must have a mid-rail spaced between the top rail and the working surface
- Has to have vertical members no more than 2.4m apart
- The guardrail system has to be able to support a worker who may fall against the guardrail
- Must be constructed of 38 by 89 millimetre construction grade lumber or other materials that are of equal or greater strength

When is a Wire Rope Guardrail Suitable?

A wire rope guardrail can be used on the external perimeter of a building under construction. Where a wire rope guardrail is used:

- The guardrail consists of a horizontal top member and a horizontal intermediate member made of wire rope that at minimum 9.5 millimeters in diameter, with vertical members at least 5 centimeters wide that are spaced at 2.4 meters
- The horizontal top member and mid rope are positioned above working surface.

- The guardrail must be set up so that a worker coming into contact with the ropes cannot fall through.

What are Toeboards?

A toeboard is a low vertical guard that is located at the outer edge of a platform, scaffold, floor, stair or walkway that is designed to prevent materials or equipment from falling over the edge.

When You Need Toeboards

- You're dealing with a permanent floor, platform, mezzanine, walkway, ramp, runway or other surface from which it is possible for materials to fall more than 1.2 meters
- If you have a temporary scaffold or work platform from which it is possible for materials to fall more than three meters

When a toeboard is required by the rules and regulations, the toeboard must extend from the floor or other horizontal surface to a height of not less than 125 millimetres from the floor.



Summary

Guardrails are one of the most effective forms of fall protection. It allows a worker to move freely on the working surface and remain safe at the same time. It is the most effective permanent solution as it prevents the fall entirely.

Please refer to The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2020 for more information