



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF
SAFETY PROFESSIONALS

May 5, 2026

U.S. Department of Labor
Occupational Safety and Health Administration
200 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20210

ASSP Supporting Comment to OSHA From Z359 Cages, Compliance Dates, and Fall Protection

Technical Comment - Department of Labor
Occupational Safety and Health Administration
29 CFR Part 1910
[Docket No. OSHA-2025-0072], RIN 1218-AD73
Federal Register Announcement of April 6, 2026

OSHA Insight Request: "...This proposed rule removes a deadline in OSHA's Walking-Working Surfaces standard by which all fixed ladders that extend more than 24 feet above a lower level must be equipped with personal fall arrest systems or ladder safety systems. Additionally, OSHA is seeking comment on repealing or revising the requirement that employers use personal fall arrest systems on all fixed ladders over 24 feet tall and instead permitting employers to continue to use ladder cages or wells..."

Attached to this cover letter you will find a technical comment from our ASSP Z359 Fall Protection Committee addressing the subject noted above.

ASSP asks that OSHA review the Z359 technical comment in detail and consider the technical insights and ramifications noted by the committee. We also note the Society's long support for the use of voluntary national consensus standards in the public sector. Along with the included Z359 technical comment we have also attached our position statement titled:

"The Role of Voluntary National Consensus Standards in Occupational Safety & Health".

If ASSP can be of any further assistance with this matter, please feel free to contact the Society.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda Tapp, CSP, ALCM, CPTD
2025-26 ASSP President



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Attached: ASSP Z359 Comment addressing April 6th OSHA Federal Register Announcement
ASSP Position Statement Addressing the Use of Consensus Standards



Z359 COMMITTEE

AN ANSI/ASSP STANDARDS COMMITTEE

FALL PROTECTION AND FALL RESTRAINT

520 N. Northwest Highway • Park Ridge, IL 60068

Phone: 847-699-2929

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Z359 Position

It is the considered opinion of the members of the American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP) Z359 Fall Protection Committee that the requirements established in 29 CFR Part 1910.28(b)(9) be maintained, enforced, and already existing deadlines not be removed. In addition, the Z359 Committee also opposes efforts addressing: “*repealing or revising the requirement that employers use personal fall arrest systems on all fixed ladders over 24 feet tall and instead permitting employers to continue to use ladder cages or wells.*” In an effort to simplify our position, we assert the following points.

1. According to past Bureau of Labor Statistics data, approximately one out of six fall fatalities is ladder related. While portable ladders are a component of this statistic, fixed ladders remain a considerable exposure for the worker. To this point, “accident search results” using the keywords “fixed ladder” for 2002 to 2026 on OSHA’s website showed 239 fall injuries or fatalities from fixed ladders, representing a significant risk to workers.

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2. Cages and wells do not provide protection equivalent to personal fall arrest or ladder safety systems. When a fall occurs in a ladder cage, it is the employee's body conflicting with the ladder cage structure that impedes the fall, potentially causing significant injury and rarely arresting the fall at all. In contrast, ladder safety systems and personal fall arrest systems, as addressed in ANSI/ASSP Z359 standards, are subject to defined performance criteria that include controlled arrest forces and predictable engagement. Peer-reviewed and government-commissioned research, consistently detail the hazards associated with ladder cages, confirm that they do not provide equivalent protection to ladder safety systems, and confirm that ladder safety systems can safely arrest falls. Key points include:
 - a. In the chance occurrence that a cage did arrest a fall by a worker getting caught by the cage, serious injury or death could occur. If a worker were caught by a cage, recovery and rescue could be difficult.¹
 - b. Accidents reviewed indicated that workers fell to a lower level and were rarely caught by a cage.²
 - c. Caged ladders do not provide the same level of protection as ladder-mounted fall arrest systems and provide limited benefit in reducing injury severity and offer negligible protection in backward or lateral fall scenarios—conditions commonly associated with fatigue, mis-steps, or medical events.³
 - d. Compliant systems can arrest falls within controlled distances and forces when properly installed and used.⁴

Personal fall arrest and ladder safety systems are commercially available and, for the reasons listed above, are widely accepted as the preferred method to protect workers climbing fixed ladders when other safer means of protection, such as stairs or intermediate landing platforms, are not feasible. Based on user-feedback, personal fall arrest systems are typically preferred over ladder safety systems due to familiarity with equipment, ease of use, lack of climbing obstructions on the ladder, and other related reasons.

3. Those who have petitioned OSHA to have this rule amended or rescinded have put forth an estimated cost of \$54,545 per ladder. This number is likely two to three times the average cost. While a fifty-foot ladder safety system ranges in cost between \$500 and \$1,500 and only takes a few hours to install, there are additional costs that must be considered including engineering, contracting, mobilization, and certification of the fall protection systems. Due to individual conditions, the actual cost associated with a ladder climbing system can vary significantly from one site to another. Input derived from Z359

¹ Health and Safety Executive (HSE). *RR258: Falls from Fixed Ladders and Access Systems*. United Kingdom.

² Health and Safety Executive (HSE). *RR258: Falls from Fixed Ladders and Access Systems*. United Kingdom.

³ Health and Safety Executive (HSE). *RR657: Evaluation of Fall Prevention and Protection Measures on Fixed Access Systems*. United Kingdom.

⁴ National Association for Tower Erection (NATE) & Steel Erectors of Metropolitan Chicago (SEMC). *Wire Rope Safety Sleeve Testing Report II – Final*. 2021.

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committee members shows this average cost may be closer to \$15,000 to \$25,000 For further comparison, data pulled from [usaspending.gov](https://www.usaspending.gov) showed that the U.S. Navy spent \$735,000 since 2014 across 11 contracts under the key word search “ladder safety system.” While the publicly available data does not detail the number of ladders addressed, OSHA could potentially derive the actual costs through review of government contracts for a broad spectrum of ladders.

The Z359 Committee has reviewed the Federal Register announcement and takes the position that the deadline requirements established in 29 CFR Part 1910.28(b)(9) be maintained. In regard to the proposal to change the overall fall protection requirements, the Z359 Committee suggests, if anything, language be added to the regulation to improve the safe design and installation of ladder safety systems to include safe attachment/detachment and protection during transition at the top of the ladder.

The Z359 Committee also holds firm in our belief that it is necessary to protect workers that climb fixed ladders and related structure through the course of their employment. ASSP Z359 Fall Protection Committee’s goals align with OSHA to protect the worker, but changing deadlines, reverting, amending, or repealing the existing 1910.28(b)(9) language does not align with this goal and we believe is regressive regarding the level of safety provided to workers.

Finally, it should be noted that the supporting petition, cited by OSHA, includes a technical comment from ASSP (formerly ASSE) addressing fall protection under signature of then President Darryl Hill. The technical comment in question is addressing the term “qualified climber” and fall protection systems. The ASSP comment does not support the technical arguments being presented in the petition.

If you need more information regarding this correspondence from the ASSP Z359 Committee, please feel free to contact us via the Society.

Sincerely,

Dan Henn
Chair
Z359 Fall Protection Committee

Kevin Denis
Vice-Chair
Z359 Fall Protection Committee

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Position Statement

The Role of Voluntary National Consensus Standards in Occupational Safety & Health

ASSP supports the increased use of consensus standards in the formulation of legislation and regulation for occupational safety and health. Governmental agencies such as OSHA, CPSC, NHTSA and others should be encouraged to use these consensus standards as they provide an efficient/effective alternative to traditional public sector rule making.

ASSP supports reasonable public access to national voluntary consensus standards specifically referenced in regulatory provisions. However, this must be done without compromising the legitimate proprietary interests of the organizations that develop and maintain such standards.

ASSP opposes requirements that all such standards be made publicly available at no cost without permission of the developing organization.

ASSP opposes standards-developing bodies losing or having their copyright protections stripped due governmental incorporation of standards by reference.

Approved by ASSP Board of Directors on June 8, 2019

