

## SAFETY MATTERS CONSTRUCTION SERIES



FALLS

### Guardrail Systems

Where workers on a construction site are exposed to vertical drops of 6 feet or more, OSHA requires that employers provide fall protection in one of three ways *before* work begins:

- Placing guardrails around the hazard area.
- Deploying safety nets.
- Providing personal fall arrest systems for each employee.

Many times, the nature and location of the work will dictate the form that fall protection takes.



### Provisions for Guardrail Systems

- Top edge height of top rails, or equivalent guardrail system members, must be between 39 and 45 inches above the walking/working level, except when conditions warrant otherwise and all other criteria are met (e.g., when employees are using stilts, the top edge height of the top rail must be increased by an amount equal to the height of the stilts).
- Midrails, screens, mesh, intermediate vertical members, or equivalent intermediate structures must be installed between the top edge and the walking/working surface when there is no wall or other structure at least 21 inches high.
  - Midrails must be midway between the top edge of the guardrail system and the walking/working level.
  - Screens and mesh must extend from the top rail to the walking/working level, and along the entire opening between rail supports.
  - Intermediate members between posts must be no more than 19 inches apart.
  - Other structural members (such as additional midrails or architectural panels) must be installed so as to leave no openings wider than 19 inches.
- Guardrail systems must be capable of withstanding at least 200 pounds of force applied within 2 inches of the top edge. For more details regarding structural requirements visit [www.OSHA.gov](http://www.OSHA.gov)

Safety Matters Construction Series information is extracted directly from OSHA safety materials. For additional information consult [www.OSHA.gov](http://www.OSHA.gov)