

# OSHA CONSIDERS NIXING DEADLINE FOR FIXED LADDER SAFETY UPGRADE: WHAT YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS TO KNOW

Insights  
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## OSHA Considers Nixing Deadline For Fixed Ladder Safety Upgrade: What Your Business Needs To Know

Employers may get a reprieve from a deadline that will require them to install additional safety systems on certain ladders on their worksites within 10 years. A new proposal from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration would remove a 2036 deadline in OSHA's Walking-Working Surfaces standard for installing fall arrest or ladder safety systems on all fixed ladders that extend more than 24 feet above a lower level. The requirement to update these fixed ladders by November 2036 was originally included in a 2016 Walking-Working Surfaces rule. If the proposed change is finalized, employers will still be required to update their fixed ladders above 24 feet, but will no longer face a strict deadline. Here's everything you need to know about the proposed change announced on April 6 and how to prepare your business.

### What's In The Proposal?

The OSHA proposed rule would eliminate a deadline in the agency's Walking-Working Surfaces standard for employers to retrofit any fixed ladders that extend more than 24 feet above a lower level with personal fall arrest systems or ladder safety systems.

If finalized, employers would be permitted to update certain fixed ladders when they "reach the end of their service

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lives” and continue using ladders with cages or wells without additional safety systems. However, employers must ensure any new fixed ladders or replacements have a personal fall arrest system or ladder safety system installed.

The agency emphasized that the current mandate for any new fixed ladders to be equipped with a personal fall arrest system or ladder safety system “remains unchanged” in the proposal.

The removal of the deadline, according to the agency, will reduce employer costs, and would “not likely to result in a meaningful increase in risk to workers and the standard as a whole would remain highly protective.”

“OSHA expects that the increased level of worker training on personal fall arrest systems and ladder safety systems required by the final rule, and the heightened recognition of related fall hazards resulting from this training, will contribute to the prevention of injuries and fatalities from falls from ladders,” the agency explained in the rulemaking.

## **Seeking Feedback**

OSHA will be accepting public comments on the proposal through June 5. The agency has asked the public for feedback about removing the deadline, as well as nixing the additional ladder safety requirements from the regulation all together.

The rulemaking was spurred in part by a July 2025 petition from the American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers, American Chemistry Council, and American Petroleum Institute that urged the agency to consider abandoning the ladder safety update requirement. Such an update “imposes extraordinary costs on the industry with ‘very little, if any, safety enhancement’” the industry groups said according to the rulemaking.

## **What’s Next For My Business?**

While the proposal hasn’t yet been finalized, employers can take several steps to be proactive ahead of the potential change:

1. Review your equipment inventory to determine whether any of your ladders are subject to the requirements in the rule. Note what inventory is equipped with the enhanced

fall protection systems required by the rule, and inventory that may need to be updated.

2. Ensure you maintain records of equipment purchases to determine age and recognized safety features of your inventory.
3. Train staff and managers on fall prevention, communication around fixed ladders, and other essential safety precautions specific to your industry. Consult with FP Counsel if you need assistance developing a comprehensive safety program.
4. Consider submitting comments to the DOL on how the rule change may impact your business. The agency is [accepting public feedback until](#) June 5.

## Conclusion

We will continue to monitor this rulemaking and provide updates as warranted. Make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#) to get the most up-to-date information. If you have any questions, contact the author of this Insight, your Fisher Phillips attorney, or any member of our [Workplace Safety Team](#).