



Industry-Specific Compliance Guide 2026

Construction · Commercial/Retail · Industrial · Education & Healthcare

Height safety obligations apply across every industry — but the specific risks, access requirements, and compliance priorities vary significantly depending on your building and its use. This guide is tailored to four key industries. Find your section and use it as a practical starting point for compliance planning.

INDUSTRY 1 — CONSTRUCTION

Construction sites carry the highest fall risk of any industry in Australia. Falls account for the largest share of workplace fatalities in construction nationally. Every person working at height on a construction site — regardless of task duration — must have compliant fall protection in place.

Key Standards & Regulations

- Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011 (Federal)
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017 (Vic)
- AS/NZS 1891 — Industrial fall-arrest systems
- AS 1657 — Fixed platforms, walkways, stairways and ladders
- Code of Practice: Managing the Risk of Falls at Workplaces (Safe Work Australia)

Compliance Checklist

- SWMS prepared and in place for all work at height activities
Legally required for high-risk construction work
- Scaffolding erected and inspected by a certified scaffolder
- Edge protection installed at all leading edges above 2 m
- Roof anchor points installed before trades access the roof
- Static line systems cover the full roof travel path
- All workers hold a Construction Induction Card (White Card)
- Height safety equipment inspected prior to each use
- Rescue plan in place and communicated to all workers on site
- Principal contractor holds copies of all subcontractor SWMS
- Working at heights toolbox talks conducted and recorded

Commercial and retail buildings — from shopping centres to office towers and mixed-use developments — typically require regular roof access for HVAC maintenance, gutter clearing, antenna servicing, and building management. The risk is ongoing, which means height safety systems must be permanent and properly maintained.

Key Standards & Regulations

- AS/NZS 1891.4 — Selection, use and maintenance of industrial fall-arrest systems
- AS 1657 — Fixed platforms, walkways, stairways and ladders
- AS 1851 — Maintenance of fire protection systems (relevant for roof access)
- Building Code of Australia (NCC) — Maintenance access requirements
- Property Council of Australia — Facilities management standards

Compliance Checklist

- Permanent anchor points or static lines installed on all rooftop plant areas
Covers HVAC, cooling towers, plant rooms and other regularly accessed areas
- Fixed roof ladders certified to AS 1657 installed at all access points
- Roof access hatches lockable and signed for authorised access only
- Annual recertification of all anchor points completed and on file
- All maintenance contractors supply SWMS before roof access is granted
- Guardrails at roof perimeter or travel restraint systems in place
- Skylights guarded or covered throughout the building
- Current height safety audit report held by building management
- Height safety system documentation shared with all rooftop contractors
Trades should know what is installed before they arrive on site
- Emergency rescue procedures posted at all roof access points

Industrial and manufacturing facilities present unique height safety challenges. Rooftops often house ventilation equipment, skylights, and services requiring frequent access. Facilities may also involve height risk within the building itself — on platforms, mezzanines, and at loading dock areas. Dust, noise, and shift work can add compliance complexity.

Key Standards & Regulations

- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic) — Duties of employers
- OHS Regulations 2017 (Vic) — Working at height
- AS 1657 — Fixed platforms, walkways, stairways and ladders
- AS/NZS 1891 — Fall-arrest systems for roof access
- AS 1892 — Portable ladders (if used on site)
- Safe Work Australia — Code of Practice for Managing the Risk of Falls

Compliance Checklist

- All internal elevated platforms and mezzanines guarded to AS 1657
- Fixed roof access ladders and platforms installed and certified
- Anchor points cover rooftop equipment service paths
Ventilation, skylights, conveyors, plant rooms
- Portable ladder use is documented and ladders inspected to AS 1892
Portable ladders should be a last resort, not a routine access method
- Fall protection in place at all loading dock edges and internal elevation changes
- Skylight protection installed across the full facility roof
Particularly important in older industrial buildings
- Regular contractor SWMS review process in place
- Height safety competency verified for all maintenance staff
- Incident reports reviewed quarterly for height-related near misses
- Annual height safety audit completed and corrective actions closed out

Schools, universities, hospitals, and aged care facilities share one important characteristic: a high volume of maintenance contractors on site, often managing diverse building types from different eras. Many older school and hospital buildings lack any certified height safety systems. Duty of care obligations are heightened in these environments.

Key Standards & Regulations

- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)
- OHS Regulations 2017 (Vic)
- AS/NZS 1891 — Fall-arrest systems
- AS 1657 — Fixed access systems
- Department of Education Victoria — Contractor management requirements
- Aged Care Quality Standards — Safety obligations for service providers
- Safe Work Australia — Working at Heights guidelines

Compliance Checklist

- All maintenance contractors on site hold current height safety competency
- Roof access restricted to authorised personnel — signs posted at access points
Schools: access points must be secured against student access
- Anchor points and static lines installed and certified across all rooftop areas
Solutions exist for heritage and older building types — specialist design required
- Fixed ladders and roof hatches meet AS 1657
Older buildings commonly have non-compliant access — check before granting access
- Guardrails installed at all elevated areas accessible to staff or contractors
- Contractor SWMS reviewed and approved by facilities manager before works start
- Asbestos register checked before any roof work commences
Many pre-1990 school and hospital buildings contain asbestos materials
- Emergency procedures posted and relevant staff trained
- Annual height safety audit report held in facilities management records
- Corrective actions from the last audit are fully closed out

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