



BSI Standards Publication

Personal fall protection equipment -
Anchor systems - System design,
installation and inspection -
Code of practice

BS 7883:2019 – Transition to Full Compliance

BS7883:2019 - Personal fall protection equipment – Anchor systems – System design, installation, and inspection – Code of practice

This relatively new standard provides a framework to achieve compliance with legal duties for System Designers, Installers, Inspectors and managers (Duty Holders) of fall protection systems.

It is a tough standard to comply with and the vast majority of stakeholders in this sector do not currently comply with it, but BS 7883 has changed nothing in terms of the fundamental legal duty to ensure a safe system, so far as reasonably practicable. The industry had simply not been doing so adequately previously.

It will present technical, financial, procedural, and cultural challenges to adapt to BS 7883 for all parties. And it will take time, but there is no formal 'grace period' to achieve compliance, it should be done as soon as possible, so far as reasonably practicable.

Below are some options for how BS 7883 compliance might be approached:

1 – Ignore the requirement to comply

Compliance with technical standards is not a legal duty, however if the processes used do not comply, there should be an alternative and equivalent methodology in place to demonstrate that a safe system has been provided. It would be inefficient to create a new process when this standard now provides one.

The consequence of non-compliance would be that those with responsibility for planning or managing the work at height would fail to demonstrate adequate safety, which could be construed as negligence.

2 – Wait for the market to shift to general compliance from general non-compliance

There is a duty to provide safe systems of work so far as is reasonably practicable and this can be considered as balancing cost against risks. There would need to be an immediate justification for waiting to comply.

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3 – Take a structured approach to transition

If the manager of the fall protection systems and the inspector review and risk assess how systems are used and introduce a structured approach to achieving compliance, this could be considered as a reasonably practicable approach.

There will probably be short-term, significant, cost increases for inspection work, but these should peak and then decrease after the first compliant inspection. In the longer term overall costs may be lower.

Short-term control measures, such as restrictions on use, higher requirements for user competency and/ or short-term removal from service could be utilised during the period of time that it takes to implement engineering or information (documents/ signage) changes required to achieve compliance.

Additionally, systems may be inspected and rated as "Conditional Pass" where it can be proven they are safe to remain in service but are not yet fully compliant. They could remain at this status indefinitely if this can be shown to be a reasonably practicable approach.

4 – Aim for immediate full compliance

Whilst this is the most desirable option, it will be difficult to achieve in the short-term. There will be many situations where required information is not available and additional time and resources will need to be employed to find or generate it. It may be considered as not reasonably practicable to take this approach.

