

AMERICAN NATIONAL STANDARD

ANSI/ASSE Z359.2-2017 Minimum Requirements for a Comprehensive Managed Fall Protection Program

Part of the Fall Protection Code

10 Things to Know about ANSI Z359

I'm frequently asked questions about ANSI Z359 standards, the committee(s), or the process, since the fall meeting just wrapped up, I figured the "10 Things to Know about ANSI Z359" seemed fitting. In no particular order;

- 1. Voluntary Consensus.** Z359 standards are voluntary consensus standards. They are documents created by a nationally recognized standards-producing organization (ANSI) under procedures where all interested parties reached a substantial agreement. You can search "standardization", "consensus standard", "voluntary consensus standard", or "OSHA 1910.2(g)" for more information. It should be noted that Z359 standards are not law unless they are incorporated by reference. Currently, no Z359 standards are incorporated by reference in federal OSHA fall protection regulations. Although Z359 standards are not law, they are often used to bolster citations or arguments, so many people follow them as best practices or include them in fall protection programs.
- 2. 75 Members.** Currently, seventy-five organizations make up the interested parties on the Z359 Committee. The seventy-five are a mix of manufacturers, employers, government, and general interest groups. You can open any Z359 standard to see a list of the members at the time the standard was published. To prevent any one interest group from dominating the standard contents, ANSI caps the member limit on any category to 33%. Every organization has one vote, regardless of how many people they have attending or working on standards. These seventy-five organizations make up the "full committee" and they splinter off into "subcommittees" to focus efforts on individual standards or tasks. The subcommittees are informal, ad-hoc groups that do the heavy lifting on standards development and bring the work to the full committee. Any interested organization can attend the meetings and make an application to become a member. Membership organizations frequently change and organizations can work on a subcommittee without being a full committee member.
- 3. Meet Twice per Year.** The Z359 committee meets twice a year, usually for the better part of three days, once in the spring and once in the fall. Agenda items include issues, revisions, new standards, interpretations, and several other fall protection topics. Ignoring the covid years, the committee meets in person on pre-determined dates usually in the greater Chicago area.
- 4. ASSP is the Secretariat.** The American Society of Safety Professionals, <https://www.assp.org/>, is the secretariat that manages the committee and Z359 standards. Z359 does not have staff. All 75 members are volunteers, unpaid, with ASSP staff managing the standards. ASSP coordinates the meetings, votes, minutes, membership, procedures, marketing, delivery, sales, leadership, and several other tasks related to Z359 standards.
- 5. Numbering Sequence.** The Z359 Fall Protection Code is currently made up of fifteen individual documents. Each has a unique identifier, Z359.XX. The intent is the lower decimal numbers (.0,.1,.2,.6,.7, etc.), are not equipment-related, but program or testing standards that apply globally across all standards. The higher numbers, working from the harness outward (.11,.12,.13,.14, etc.), are equipment-specific standards. It's not

perfect, a couple of the numbers, (.3, .4, .9) don't align with this order, but may change over time. A list with links to all the Z359 Standards can be found at <https://wahmember.com/StandardsSummary>.

6. **Does not Certify Equipment.** Contrary to a popular belief, neither the Z359 committee nor ASSE certifies equipment as meeting standards. The scope of the Z359 committee and secretariat is to generate the documents, not to test, qualify, or evaluate equipment manufactured according to them. Manufacturers will design, manufacture, test, label, and sell products as meeting the standard, but Z359 does not approve the equipment the manufacturers put out.
7. **Does not Police.** Along the same lines as not approving equipment, Z359 standards are not policed or enforced by the committee or the secretariat. Being an industry watchdog and chasing down fraudulent claims of compliance isn't what Z359 does. Contacting the testing agency, the ISO 17025 Lab Manager, and returning or not buying the product are really the only avenues a consumer has if they suspect a product labeled as meeting a standard does not.
8. **Common Format.** Z359 equipment standards follow a similar format. Sections 1 and 2 are Scope and Definitions, where 3,4, and 5 are Design, Testing, and Marking/Instruction requirements. Each standard is a little unique with some having additional chapters and content, but this format is consistent with the equipment standards. It takes several years to change content within a standard, so it is a challenge to have all standards match all the time because there are several years between each iteration of the standard.
9. **5-Year Life... sort of, usually.** By procedure, an ANSI standard is required to be touched and be revised or re-affirmed every five years. This policy keeps standards fresh and enables a standard to include and take advantage of changes in technology or advancements in the industry. It's common to need more than five years to work on a standard, so extensions for an additional five years can be granted. It's possible for a standard to go ten years without being updated. If a standard is not revised or re-affirmed within ten years, it is automatically withdrawn, no questions asked.
10. **Anyone Can Attend.** ANSI meetings are not exclusive, they are open to the public and anyone can attend. You have to register through the ASSE and foot your own bill. There are limitations on the number of seats available, but there are no exclusions.

Work-at-Height provides education, consulting, and resources to Fall Protection Professionals. If you have any questions about fall protection or the content in this article, you can reach me at denis@wahmember.com.

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