

Safety harnesses

Background information:

The use of harness systems, although they have greatly reduced the number of deaths in the construction industry, must now be regarded as a last resort for fall arrest. Personal fall protection equipment that prevents a fall, e.g. a work restraint system, should always take priority over personal equipment which only limits the height and/or consequences of a fall, e.g. a fall arrest system. Full body harnesses are only to be used on Morgan Sindall projects. Belt type restrainers are not to be used. Accidents still mainly occur where they are not anchored correctly to a secure fixing or not properly worn.

Hazards:

- Falling from height
- Insecure anchorage points
- Worn or damaged webbing
- Worn or damaged shock absorbers
- Inadequate 'swing' under fall area (assessment of height of drop).

Health and safety points:

- A risk assessment must be carried out prior to use.
 - First, avoid work at height where possible.
 - Secondly, use work equipment or other measures to prevent falls where they cannot avoid working at height, (e.g. edge protection, Mobile Elevated Working Platforms (MEWPs), work restraint system). This includes anyone working on roofs, confined space working, working over water, etc.
 - Lastly, fall-arrest equipment must incorporate a shock absorber to limit the impact from force of a fall on the user and reduce the possibility of body injury.
- Full body harnesses to BS EN 361 and restraint lanyard (BS EN 354) must be worn whilst working in the basket of a MEWP (boom access equipment)
- Where harnesses are used for confined space working they should be attached directly to the safety line or retrieval mechanism and not by the use of lanyard
- Ensure that there is an adequate clearance distance when using fall arrest equipment to reduce the risk of any operative falling, landing or swinging into any fixed obstacle
- You will need to make sure:
 - anchors and anchorage points are of adequate strength,
 - where possible, anchors and anchor points are above the user so that the anchor line or lanyard is taut or has as little slack as possible; and
 - Suitable resource plans are in place prior to work starting, including emergency descent and rescue arrangements.
- Equipment should be kept clean and dry and properly stored; thoroughly dried before storage, if it has become wet; and only altered or repaired when approved by the manufacturer
- Harnesses must have a valid test certificate on site and individual registration number
- Checks and inspections should be undertaken by a designated person:
 - new equipment should be checked to make sure it is appropriate for the intended use, that it operates correctly and that it is in good condition;
 - in addition, components should be examined 'at least twelve-monthly', detailed inspection at least every three months for frequently used equipment and records kept of inspections;
 - (as appropriate) interim inspections should be made where a hazard that could cause significant deterioration in the equipment is present, e.g. use in acidic or alkaline environments or grit blasting etc;
 - damaged equipment must be taken out of service immediately. Even a small cut in webbing can seriously affect performance.
- Check all equipment before each use for defects:
 - All webbing and seams for cuts (of 1mm or more at the edges of webbing lanyards), cracks, abrasions, stretching and any other deterioration which may be due to weather conditions;
 - Carabiners, snap springs for straining jaws;
 - Buckles and clasps for distortion and wear.
- Training and assessment for competency in the use of personal fall protection systems and equipment

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Management System

Toolbox talks

includes knowledge of the manufacturer's instructions and product information, which should be followed at all times (familiarisation training is not acceptable).

Question time:

- Q What must take place before safety harnesses are issued?
- Q Where should anchorage points be fixed?
- Q What three main areas should be inspected prior to using harnesses?

Have you got any questions?

Record questions on the attendance sheet.

Safety reminder:

Make sure you know where the correct anchor points are and treat your harness and safety equipment with respect.

**Remember: When checking or inspecting lanyards think
WEBBING – STITCHING - HARDWARE**

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