



Personal Fall Protection Systems

HS02-012B (10-06)

A 5-Minute Safety Training Aid

Often you may be required to work at elevated levels six feet or more above lower levels that are not protected by handrails or safety nets.

When working in these areas, it is required that you wear a personal fall protection device. You should also wear a personal fall protection device when you're working on a scaffold or on suspended scaffolds having only one or two suspension points.

What do we mean by a personal fall protection device?

A personal fall protection device is a personal fall-arrest device like a safety harness or a positioning device like a window cleaner's belt or lineman's belt, or a personal fall protection device for climbing activities. These devices include a harness you wear around yourself, any necessary fittings, and the lanyard that fastens you and the device to a substantial anchorage.

Inspect before using—each time

If we are to expect maximum protection from personal protective equipment, we must inspect and maintain it, as well as wear it. Inspect your fall protection device and hardware carefully before each use to be sure there are no defects. Check the harness for frays, cuts, or other damage. If you do any welding, check for burns from spatter or sparks. Inspect the tongue end of the harness for wear as a result of buckling and unbuckling. Also check for other wear and missing grommets, if the belt has them. Check for wear or damage where the buckle is attached to the harness. Don't forget the buckle. Look for distortion. The buckle tongue must move freely and overlap the buckle frame. Also check the roller for distortion and sharp edges. It should turn freely on the buckle frame. Make sure D-rings are free of breaks, cracks, or rough edges and that they move freely. Check rivets for cracks and burrs. A bent rivet may fail under stress. Follow the device manufacturers inspection guidelines.

Lanyards must be inspected

Lanyards should be nylon, rope, or equivalent with a minimum of one-half inch diameter and 5,400 pound breaking strength. They should be tied off so that if you should fall, you won't drop more than six feet. As with all other portions of the device, lanyards should be inspected end-to-end before each use. Look for burns and for worn, broken, or cut fibers. Inspect snaphooks for distortion of the bill and eye sections, and for cracks and corroded or pitted surfaces. The keeper latch should seat into the bill without binding, and should not be distorted. The spring should have enough tension to close the keeper.

Care and maintenance

Don't allow acids, caustics, or other corrosive materials to come in contact with the fall protection device, lanyard, or lifeline. Avoid dropping the device on the ground and keep it away from sharp tools or objects. Cutting or rough-punching extra holes in the device can weaken it, as well as void the manufacturer's warranty. Never use gasoline or other drying solvents on any harness. Instead, lightly coat leather products with leather conditioners such as saddle soap. Be careful of products that contain ingredients, such as neatsfoot oil, that may degrade the stitching. For fabric harnesses, use only the special dressing recommended by the manufacturer. Store all harnesses in separate, dry compartments or hang them up so they won't be damaged. Should the system become worn, frayed, or damaged, it must be destroyed to prevent possible injury or death.

Between you and death or injury

The personal fall protection device is the only thing between you and possible death or serious injury if you should happen to fall. Keep this in mind and you will take good care of your fall protection device.

Remember to practice safety. Don't learn it by accident.

The Texas Department of Insurance,
Division of Workers' Compensation (TDI/DWC)
E-mail resourcecenter@tdi.state.tx.us
or call 1-800-687-7080 for more information.

Safety Violations Hotline
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