

Toolbox Safety Topic

Proper Use of Personal Fall Arrest Systems

I. INTRODUCE THE TOPIC

Each year, there are over 100,000 disabling injuries and over 700 fatalities related to falls. What do you need to know about falls in order to protect yourself? First, you need to know what constitutes a fall hazard. A fall hazard exists whenever you are near an unguarded edge where the fall distance is 4' or greater. There are permanent solutions to eliminating the hazard, such as installing a guardrail system, but in many cases, the hazard cannot be eliminated and you must find a way to work safely around the hazard. In conjunction with appropriate training, a personal fall arrest system is often the answer. A personal fall arrest system consists of a full body harness and shock-absorbing lanyard with locking snaphooks.

II. SPARK THEIR ATTENTION

Statistics show that a fall from 6' could result in death, depending on how you land and what you land on. Even at 4' you could incur a disabling injury (i.e. broken bone, pulled muscle, torn ligament, etc.). Virginia Tech is trying not only to prevent deaths from falls, but serious injuries as well.

III. ASK A RELATED QUESTION

What is your personal objective when it comes to fall protection? To prevent death, or to prevent a serious injury? Hopefully it's both! Which is why it's up to you recognize the fall hazards in many cases and ensure you're taking the right precautions.

IV. POINT OUT DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

The following is a list of common fall hazards, some of which may have engineering controls (ex. guardrails) or administrative controls (safe work practices or training) which reduce the fall hazard to an acceptable level. How many do you encounter each day?

- docks or ramps with a drop of 4' or greater
- roof work
- ladders
- aerial lifts
- holes in floors or walls greater than 2' (including skylights)
- scaffolds
- construction work (brick laying, rebar frames, concrete slip forms, steel erection, etc.)
- elevated storage areas
- others?

V. EXPLAIN POLICIES AND/OR PROCEDURES

1. All personal fall protection users must attend training prior to initial use.
2. Inspect your harness and lanyard before use, especially if you share equipment.
3. Remove damaged equipment from the work area by turning in to your supervisor or safety representative.
4. Harness should be tightened until snug, but not uncomfortable.
5. Make sure the anchor point you will hook off to is appropriate. Acceptable anchor points are steel beams, large rebar, concrete pillars, large pipe. You can assume these structures will support at least 5,000 pounds of force. Anything other than these choices must be determined by a "qualified person"
6. Hook your lanyard directly into the anchor point. Do not wrap the lanyard around the structure and hook back onto the lanyard!

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- VI. Suppose there is an accident involving this hazard, what would you do? *(Give employees an opportunity to respond, then discuss the procedure below.)*

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Date: _____

Meeting Conducted By: _____ Title: _____

Attendees

#	NAME	#	NAME
1		24	
2		25	
3		26	
4		27	
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