

“For Safety’s Sake - Do Something”

Fall Protection



In the United States there are two regulatory agencies that can cite employers for not properly protecting employees. Both agencies fall under the United States Department of Labor; Occupational Safety and Health Association (OSHA), and Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA). These regulatory agencies are responsible for enforcing the safety and health laws to protect employees.

Fall Protection Equipment

When dealing with a fall, the best option to eliminate an exposure is to engineer the problem away and thus not have an exposure possible. If you cannot engineer the problem away, the second option is to implement a Fall Restraint System. This allows an employee to work but at no time actually take a fall. This is completed by using a restraint lanyard that is reduced in length thus preventing a fall.

The last option is Fall Arrest. With Fall Arrest, the employee can take a fall but is prevented from impacting lower areas by the use of a lanyard that prohibits impact. This does not mitigate the effects of falling and then coming to a stop while tethered to a lanyard but does prevent impact to the lower level. So you have to know how far of a fall is acceptable with which type of exposure. With Fall Arrest, a worker can free fall only six feet and with Fall Restraint, the worker can free fall only two feet.

When Are You Required to Use PPE?

- Mining industry fall protection trigger height - 0 inches
- Maximum step vertically permissible in construction - 19 inches
- Distance permitted to step onto a ladder or scaffold as first step - 24 inches
- Fall protection trigger height for General Industry - 4 feet
- Fall protection trigger height for Construction - 6 feet
- Maximum height allowed on an unprotected scaffold work platform - 10 feet
- Trigger height for fall protection during steel erection - 15 feet
- Maximum height allowed without being tied off in steel erection - 30 feet
- Height required for fall protection using a ladder maintaining 3 point contact - infinity

PPE Inspections

Aside from knowing when to utilize fall protection, you need to know how to inspect the equipment. Some of the things to look for are:

- Ripped or torn webbing or stitching
- Defective hardware
- Missing parts or pieces
- Distortion
- Shock indicators popped
- Rust or burns, dirt or grease
- Stretched lanyards
- Failure to retract on SRL
- Cracks
- Missing parts
- Failure to retract
- Broken strands, and broken latch / hooks

All of these inspection items and others, require constant attention each time the equipment is used by the User. Training is required as an Authorized User and a Competent Person.