Safety Awareness

Brief Topic Safety Refresher Training For Associates

2024

ABCs of Personal Fall Arrest Systems – Body Harnesses

”B” Is for Body Harnesses

A body harness is a key part of any personal fall arrest system in that it is the primary piece of equipment that is physically worn by an employee. The harness is then tethered to an anchorage that is capable of catching and supporting the weight of an employee should they fall.

Harnesses include shoulder straps and leg straps, a sub-pelvic assembly, adjustable buckles or fasteners, and one or more D-rings to connect to other components of the fall arrest system.

Pre-Use Inspection

Prior to use, each worker must inspect the fall arrest equipment they will use for defects or damage. The first step in the inspection process should always be to check the inspection tag if an annual inspection was completed less than 12 months prior to the current date. If not, the unit needs to be marked when the inspection is completed. Harness Inspection includes the following:

Labels
All labels must be present and fully legible with the last annual inspection less than 12 months prior to the current date documented on the inspection tag.

Stitching
If any stitches are pulled or broken, the harness must be removed from service. Closely inspect “critical stitching” which will be in a color that contrasts with the webbing.

Webbing
Inspect for cuts, tears, stretching of fibers, fraying, raveling of edges, excessive wear or abrasion, chemical damage, burns, UV degradation, and weld splatter. Hold hands six to eight inches apart and flex webbing into a “U” shape to reveal frayed or broken fiber. The presence of hardened or discolored spots on the webbing indicates chemical or excessive heat exposure.

Connectors
Inspect all metal components including “O-rings”, “D-Rings” leg grommets, chest strap connecting hardware, and adjustment components. Look for cracks, heat damage, distortion, corrosion, and excessive wear.

All The Way On, or All the Way Off

Each and every time you put on your full body harness, make certain that it is ALL the way on, connected, and properly adjusted, and leave it that way until you are ready to take it ALL the way off. That is because if you loosen or disconnect any part of your harness for even a short time, such as at a rest break or lunch, you might forget to make needed readjustments or reattachments when you are ready to resume work.

Donning the Harness

- When adjusting your full body fall arrest harness, make certain that the D-ring on back, where your lanyard attaches, is centered evenly between your shoulder blades.
- Also make sure the chest strap in front is properly positioned across your chest and snug. If it is positioned too low or too loose, your body could be thrust forward when you hit the end of your lanyard during a fall, causing you to roll forward and out of your harness. Conversely, the chest strap could be yanked up into your throat if it is positioned too high on your chest. Also, adjust your shoulder straps to fit snugly so they don't slip off.
- Always make sure the leg straps are positioned properly, below your butt cheeks. Straps that are too loose, or positioned too high, could lead to you experiencing a nasty wedgie.
- Take the time to confirm that each and every buckle on your harness is properly adjusted and fully engaged, and that any loose ends of straps are tucked into retainers when provided. Leaving just one buckle loose or unbuckled could lead to failure of the harness to safely arrest your fall.
- When properly adjusted, you should only be able to fit two fingers of your flat hand between your body and the straps on your harness.

One key part of maximizing the durability and lifespan of a harness is storing it correctly. When not being used, harnesses should be hung up in a clean, dry and cool area. Keep them off the floor and away from other equipment. Chemicals, sunlight and welding slag can all cause damage to harnesses. The webbing of a body harness is particularly susceptible to damage.

Name	Signature	Name	Signature