

Care Of Safety Belts, Harnesses and Lanyards

By Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

What should you know about protection?

If you are at risk for falling 6 feet or more at your workplace, you should wear the appropriate fall-protection equipment.

If fall protection is required, establish a complete fall-protection program if one is not already in place. The program should include the training of workers and the selection, fit testing, maintenance and inspection of the equipment.

What should you know about fall protective equipment?

- Inspect your equipment daily.
- Replace defective equipment. If there is any doubt about the safety of the equipment, do not use it.
- Replace any equipment, including ropes, involved in a fall. Refer any questionable defects to a trained inspector.
- A trained inspector should examine equipment at least yearly.
- It is advisable to use shock absorbers if the arresting forces of the lanyard alone can cause injury.
- Use the right equipment for the job. Refer to CSA Standard Z259.1-95 "Safety Belts and Lanyards" or Z259.10-M90 "Full Body Harnesses".

How do you inspect the webbing (body of belt, harness or lanyard)?

- Inspect the entire surface of webbing for damage. Beginning at one end, bend the webbing in an inverted U. Holding the body side of the belt toward you, grasp the belt with your hands 6 to 8 inches apart.
- Watch for frayed edges, broken fibers, pulled stitches, cuts or chemical damage. Broken webbing strands generally appear as tufts on the webbing surface.
- Replace according to manufacturer's guidelines.

How do you inspect the buckle?

- Inspect for loose, distorted or broken grommets. Do not cut or punch additional holes in the waist strap or strength members.
- Check a belt without grommets for torn or elongated holes that could cause the buckle tongue to slip.
- Inspect the buckle for distortion and sharp edges. The outer and center bars must be straight. Carefully check corners and attachment points of the center bar. They should overlap the buckle frame and move freely back and forth in their sockets. The roller should turn freely on the frame.
- Check that rivets are tight and cannot be moved. The body side of the rivet base and outside rivet burr should be flat against the material. Make sure the rivets are not bent.
- Inspect for pitted or cracked rivets that show signs of chemical corrosion.

How do you inspect the rope?

- Rotate the rope lanyard and inspect from end to end for fuzzy, worn, broken or cut fibers. Weakened areas have noticeable changes in the original rope diameter.
- Replace when the rope diameter is not uniform throughout, following a short break-in period.
- The older a rope is and the more use it gets, the more important testing and inspection become.

What should you know about hardware (forged-steel snaps, D rings)?

- Inspect hardware for cracks or other defects. Replace the belt if the D ring is not at a 90-degree angle and does not move vertically independent of the body pad or D saddle.
- Inspect tool loops and belt stitching for broken or stretched loops.
- Check bag rings and knife snaps to see that they are secure and working properly. Check tool loop rivets. Check for thread separation or rotting, both inside and outside the body pad belt.
- Inspect snaps for hook and eye distortions, cracks, corrosion, or pitted surfaces. The keeper (latch) should be seated into the snap nose without binding and should not be distorted or obstructed. The keeper spring should exert sufficient force to close the keeper firmly.

What should you look for during the safety strap inspection?

- Inspect for cut fibers or damaged stitches inch by inch by flexing the strap in an inverted U. Note cuts, frayed areas or corrosion damage.
- Check friction buckle for slippage and sharp buckle edges.
- Replace when tongue buckle holes are excessively worn or elongated.

How do I clean my equipment?

Basic care prolongs the life of the harness and contributes to its performance.

- Wipe off all surface dirt with a sponge dampened in plain water. Rinse the sponge and squeeze it dry. Dip the sponge in a mild solution of water and commercial soap or detergent. Work up a thick lather with a vigorous back and forth motion.
- Rinse the webbing in clean water.
- Wipe the belt dry with a clean cloth. Hang freely to dry.
- Dry the belt and other equipment away from direct heat, and out of long periods of sunlight.
- Store in a clean, dry area, free of fumes, sunlight or corrosive materials and in such a way that it does not warp or distort the belt.

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