

SAFETY TALK

[suspended access equipment]

Fall Protection

Suspended access equipment includes swing stages, work cages, and boatswain's (bosun's) chairs.

The basic rule is simple: there must be two independent means of support for workers using this equipment.

Two Independent Means of Support

One independent means of support is the suspension system of the swing stage, cage, or chair. This usually consists of:

- Climbers
- Suspension lines
- Outrigger beams
- Tie-backs
- Anchors
- Counterweights

The second independent means of support for each worker is a fall-arresting system. This consists of a:

- Full-body harness
- Lanyard
- Lifeline
- Rope grab
- Lifeline anchor

If the suspension system fails, the worker will be saved by the fall-arresting system.

A second independent means of support can also be another complete suspension system. On a swing stage, for instance, there could be four outrigger beams instead of two, four suspension lines instead of two, and so on. If one suspension system fails, the other will take over. This arrangement is used on a tiered stage.

Even with two complete suspension systems you still have to wear a full-body harness and lanyard. In this case you would tie off to a stirrup in the stage or to a line secured to both stirrups.

Fall-Arresting System Inspection

[This part of the talk should include hands-on inspection of equipment.]

If all else fails, your fall-arrest equipment is your last line of defence. Make sure it works.

Check your harness for:

- Approval by the CSA (Canadian Standards Association)
- Damage to straps and fasteners
- Lanyard securely attached to D-ring, between the shoulder blades by an eye splice and thimble, a locking snap-hook, or a locking carabiner
- Lanyard and shock-absorber free of damage

Make sure your rope grab is secured upright, working, installed correctly to the lifeline, and has no damaged parts or sharp edges that could cut the lifeline.

Your lanyard should be secured to the rope grab with a locking snap-hook or a locking carabiner to keep it from accidentally coming out.

Your lifeline should be free of damage, wear, and decay. It should be protected from rubbing and scraping where it passes over corners or edges.

Next time we'll talk about where and how to anchor lifelines and suspension lines.

In New Brunswick, the law regarding suspended work platforms can be found in *General Regulation 91-191* under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

Fall Protection Code of Practice and Rescue Plan

Your employer or building owner will provide you with information on the anchorages to use. If permanent anchors are to be used, the building owner shall provide proof that they are safe to use and that they have been designed and tested for use.

The contractor or employer will instruct you in the fall protection rescue procedures for the work site.

In some circumstances, a fall protection code of practice will be required for your work site. Your employer or the contractor will instruct you on the code of practice.