

HEALTH AND SAFETY ADVISORY

Inspecting fall protection equipment before each use

Worn or damaged fall protection equipment is both dangerous and ineffective. To prevent hazards, workers must inspect all parts of their fall protection equipment before each use. These pre-use inspections are a key part of a company's preventive maintenance program, which involves regularly inspecting tools and equipment to ensure they remain in safe, usable condition. Equipment defects—such as worn or missing parts—can become major safety hazards if they are not discovered before use. Always refer to the manufacturer's operating manual for guidance on the frequency of inspections for fall protection equipment.

Pre-use equipment inspections are vital to workplace safety because they:

- Prevent incidents, injuries, and illnesses
- Show workers' commitment to the company's occupational health and safety management system
- Are required by the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and *Regulation for Construction Projects* (O. Reg. 213/91)

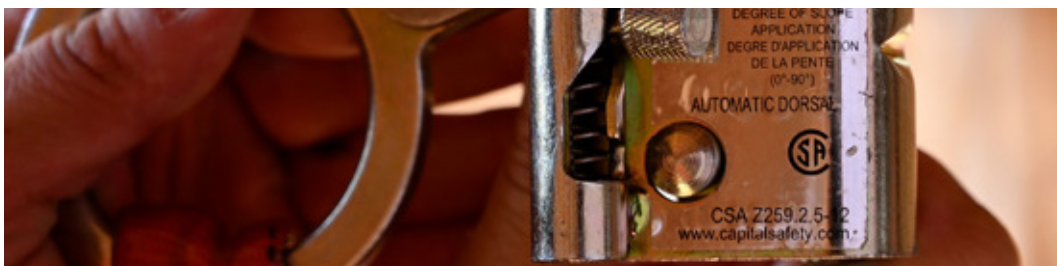
Always refer to the manufacturer's operating manual

Employers and workers both have a role to play when it comes to inspecting equipment. To carry out pre-use inspections, workers must be "competent." This means they should be knowledgeable about any real or potential hazards in the workplace, understand relevant safety laws and regulations, and know what corrective actions to take when necessary. According to Section 25(1) of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, employers must designate competent workers or supervisors to conduct inspections and ensure that equipment, materials, and protective devices provided to workers are maintained in good condition.

Manufacturer's operating manuals provide clear, step-by-step instructions on how to inspect fall protection equipment. They outline how to check for damage or wear, assess the condition of critical parts, and confirm that the equipment is functioning properly. These manuals also include regular maintenance and inspection schedules and requirements for inspection and training. In some cases, the manual may require a workplace to keep an inspection log.

Inspect each component of a fall protection system

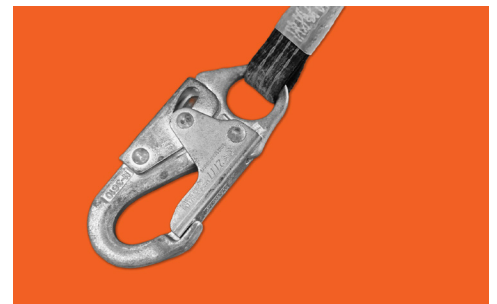
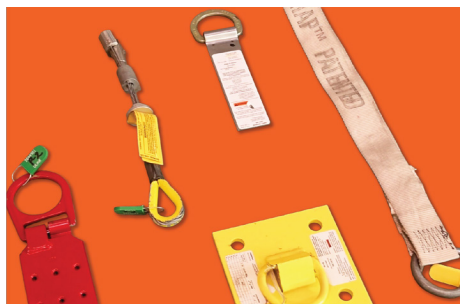
Before each use, it is essential to inspect every component of a fall protection system. This includes ensuring that the equipment is Canadian Standards Association (CSA) approved—always check for a CSA stamp.



The chart below summarizes some key parts of a fall protection system and highlights potential issues to look for during an inspection. If you detect any of these issues during an inspection, the equipment must be taken out of service:

Component	What to check for
Harness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webbing is frayed, cut, or burned • Stitching is loose, ripped, or pulled • Grommets are damaged, missing, loose, or torn • D-ring is worn, bent, or cracked • Buckles are bent, rusted, distorted, or cracked • Fall arrest indicator has been deployed
Lanyard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webbing is frayed, cut, burned, or damaged by chemicals • Stitching is loose, ripped, or pulled • Shock absorber is worn, damaged, or deployed • Metal is bent, rusted, distorted, or cracked • Fall arrest indicator has been deployed
Anchor point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anchor system is cracked, dented, discoloured, corroded, or has not been verified by a competent person
Rope grab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting rings are rusted, bent, or not centred • Moving parts are not working smoothly • Springs are broken or missing • Safety latch is broken • Locking pin is not working
Rope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fibres are fuzzy, worn, broken, rotted, knotted, discoloured, cut, burned, or damaged by chemicals • Diameter is non-uniform throughout
Connecting device	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rivets are loose, bent, cracked, or rusted • Strap has holes, distortion, or sharp edges • Carabiner is in poor condition • Snap hook is rusted, corroded, or deformed, or its spring mechanism does not work
Self-retracting lifeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locking mechanism is not working • Lifeline is cut, bent, frayed, or discoloured • Housing is cracked, burned, or damaged by chemicals • Shock absorber is worn or damaged • Buckles are bent, rusted, corroded, distorted, or cracked • Fall arrest indicator has been deployed

Note: The chart above is not a complete list of fall protection system components. Always follow the inspection requirements in the equipment manufacturer's instructions and have anchor points verified by a competent supervisor.



Finally, all formal equipment inspections must be documented. Keeping a written record of each inspection is important, as it helps workplaces track the equipment's inspection history, identify trends, and plan for corrective action. Inspectors must document the equipment's condition, specify any corrective action needed, and confirm whether issues have been addressed. The results of the inspections must be communicated to supervisors, kept on file on site, and forwarded to head office for further review.