



# Utility workers:

## Do you trust your fall protection equipment?

Utility workers who rely on fall protection equipment as part of their job need to know how to care for, maintain, and inspect their equipment. The equipment must meet current standards, must be in good condition, and must be able to withstand the rigors of the job in order to keep you safe.

### Inspections

**Inspect your fall protection equipment before each use.** During the inspection, make sure all the equipment you will be using is available. This can include the following.

- ✓ Full-body harness
- ✓ Lanyard
- ✓ Climbing belt
- ✓ Pole straps
- ✓ Personal retractable lanyard
- ✓ Spurs and other similar gear
- ✓ Fall restricting device system for wood pole climbing.

Your equipment should be stored so that it is well protected, such as in a gear bag or tote. If it's stored with spurs, use gaff guards to protect the equipment from unintentional punctures or wear.

In addition to the inspections performed before each use, a worker who is competent in inspection should perform an annual inspection of the equipment and document the results. Your company should have an inspection form that records the date of manufacture, the date put into service, the equipment being

inspected, who is doing the inspection, and the date of next documented inspection. Often the inspection form is supplied by the manufacturer and is specific to their equipment. A company can create their own form using the manufacturer's form as a guideline. Inspection forms are good for both regularly used equipment and any rescue equipment that is used in emergency situations.

### Harness

When inspecting a harness, it is important to look at the following:

- ✓ overall condition
- ✓ general cleanliness
- ✓ fall arrest indicator
- ✓ sun exposure
- ✓ wear
- ✓ labeling and marked in-service date
- ✓ webbing (look for cuts, burns, or excessive wear along load-bearing portions)
- ✓ stitching and wear at connection points
- ✓ attachment points and connectors.

### Lanyard

Inspecting the lanyard is just as important as inspecting the harness. Pay particular attention to:

- ✓ the in-service date
- ✓ the condition of webbing
- ✓ the quality of stitching at connectors
- ✓ the condition of the connector operation, compliance, and compatibility
- ✓ energy absorbers and use of the shock pack. (Is it still intact?)



## Connecting components

- ✓ Look for damage such as cracks, dents, bends, or signs of deformation.
- ✓ Make sure connecting rings are centred, not bent to one side or otherwise deformed.
- ✓ Look for signs of rust.
- ✓ Check that moving parts are working smoothly.
- ✓ Look for signs of wear or metal fatigue.

## Load-bearing components

Carefully inspect all load-bearing components of fall restricting devices. Are the pole straps in good condition? Is there excessive wear? The load-bearing portion of the climbing belt is typically webbing that connects to either D-rings, a rope bridge, or a synthetic bridge and is partially concealed by the strap that positions the belt on the worker. Belt and tool loops should be in good condition. Tags and labels should be intact. Make sure to check the in-service date and manufacturer's recommended out-of-service date.

## Rescue equipment

In addition to a worker's personal gear, consider implementing a regularly scheduled inspection of your equipment for pole top rescue, bucket rescue, bucket evacuation, tower or structure rescue, and confined space rescue. During the inspection, make sure you don't damage the rescue gear. If you drop carabiners, harnesses, lanyards, fall protection systems, or components, carefully inspect it for damage or send it to a proper inspection facility. Remove it from service if the integrity of the equipment cannot be confirmed.

To determine when equipment should come out of service, reference the inspection criteria recommendations in the informative Annex of the CSA Harness standard.

Once all rescue equipment has been inspected, document the results and keep a copy of all inspection information. These regular inspections will help keep equipment at its best. It will be ready for its intended use if ever needed.

## How **IHSA** can help

Courses such as *Advanced Fall Protection* and *Working at Heights - Fundamentals of Fall Prevention* can help ensure workers are properly trained to take part in work that requires fall protection. Rescue practices are a regular part of many IHSA courses such as *Powerline Technician Apprenticeship*, *Powerline Technician Proficiency*, and *Rescue Techniques and Bucket Evacuation*. IHSA also offers safety talks and other materials that emphasize proper use and care of fall protection equipment. For more details, visit the **Fall Prevention and Working at Heights** topic page at [ihsa.ca/topics\\_hazards](https://ihsa.ca/topics_hazards)



**The employer shall make the training and instruction record for each worker available to an inspector on request.**

(O. Reg. 213/91, s. 26.2(4))