

SafetyTalk

Suspended access equipment—Fall protection

Explain dangers

Suspension systems on swingstages, work cages, and bosun's chairs can fail. If you are not using a fall-arrest system, you can fall, resulting in serious injury or death.

Identify controls

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

1. One independent means of support for each worker is the **suspension system** holding up the stage, cage, or chair.
2. The second independent means of support is the **fall-arrest system**. This consists of a
 - full-body safety harness
 - lanyard
 - rope grab
 - lifeline
 - lifeline anchor.

If the suspension system fails, the worker will be saved by the fall-arrest system. In some cases, the second independent means of support can be another complete suspension system. On a swingstage, for instance, there would 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.

But even with two complete suspension systems, you must still wear a full-body harness and lanyard. In that case, you would tie off to a stirrup on the stage or to a line secured to both stirrups.

Demonstrate

[While talking, do a hands-on inspection of fall-arrest equipment.]

Fall-arrest equipment is your last line of defence. Make sure it works. Your **harness** must have a label identifying the CSA standard that it complies with.

Check the harness for

- cuts, burns, and signs of chemical damage
- loose or broken stitching
- frayed web material
- D-ring and keeper pads showing signs of distortion, damage, or undue wear
 - grommets and buckles showing damage, distortion, and sharp edges.

The lanyard must be securely attached to the harness D-ring by a locking snaphook or other approved means.

Your **lanyard** and **energy absorber** must be free of fraying, kinking, and loose or broken threads. The hardware should not be deformed, rusty, cracked, or unduly worn. All moving parts must move freely and easily through their full range of movement.

Make sure your **rope grab** is working, matches the type of lifeline you are using, and has no damaged parts or sharp edges that could cut the lifeline.

Your lanyard must be attached to the rope grab with a **locking snaphook** to keep it from accidentally coming out.

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

