

Inspection of fall protection equipment

Understand the requirements for equipment pre-use inspections.



Fall protection equipment offers essential protection to those who work at heights, but only if it's in good condition. Damaged or worn equipment can be ineffective at controlling fall hazards. Pre-use inspections help to make sure the equipment is safe to use before the wearer ends up in a situation where their life depends on it.

Why are inspections important?

The *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)* and *Regulation for Construction Projects (O. Reg. 213/91)* require that Ontario workers complete pre-use inspections. Pre-use equipment inspections can be an effective method for preventing workplace incidents and helping workers show their commitment to the company's occupational health and safety management system.

The inspection process

The inspection process involves employers, supervisors, and workers. Employers are responsible for choosing competent workers or supervisors to carry out inspections. According to Section 25(1)(b) of the OHSA, the employer must ensure the equipment, materials, and protective devices that they give to workers are in good condition.

A worker is "competent" when they are trained to identify workplace hazards, understand safety laws and regulations, and know what to do if they find an issue during the inspection. Competent workers should carry out pre-use inspections of their equipment.

What should an inspection include?

When planning a pre-use equipment inspection, workers and supervisors should review the manufacturer's operating manual. It provides step-by-step instructions on how to check for damage or wear, assess the condition of critical parts, and confirm that the equipment works properly. The manual also includes information about maintenance schedules, inspection schedules and requirements, and training requirements.

During a pre-use inspection, the competent worker must review every component of the fall protection system—and check for the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) stamp to confirm that the equipment is CSA approved.

The following table covers some potential issues to look out for.

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: This table is not a complete list. Always follow the inspection requirements in the equipment manufacturer's operating manual and have a competent supervisor verify anchor points.

