

## What Does OSHA Say?

“The employer shall provide for prompt rescue of employees in the event of a fall or shall assure that employees are able to rescue themselves.” 1926.502(d)(20)

### How to Speak OSHA:

“Shall” /SHal,SHə/ - used by OSHA in place of ‘must’.

Ex: “The employer must provide for prompt rescue. . .”

## Preventing Suspension Trauma with Trauma Safety Straps

Trauma safety straps are webbing foot loops that can be deployed by the victim in case of a fall. Attached to the harness, the victim places their feet in the straps and is able to stand for brief periods. This allows blood to flow out of the legs and reduces pressure on the veins.

Many harnesses have these safety straps built in; refer to your user manual for instructions.

Additionally, aftermarket straps can be purchased and attached to most any fall protection harness.

Suspension trauma can be fatal in as little as 30 minutes, but irreversible internal organ damage can happen in as little as 3-5 minutes.

(OSHA SHIB 3-24-2004, upd. 2011)



## Fall Rescue Plans

Why Do We Need One?

## Rescue Plans - They're Not Just for Confined Spaces

Have you ever heard the phrase, “failing to plan is planning to fail?” Planning for success is just as important in situations that may require rescue as it is in project development and management. We commonly think about rescue plans when working in confined spaces. However, one area that is often overlooked is elevated work. We put a great deal of time and training into preventing falls, but we don't tend to think about what to do should a fall occur.

But, why do we need a fall rescue plan? First off, OSHA requires it, in a round-about way. The standard states that employers must provide prompt rescue of employees that have fallen. (Remember, OSHA tells us what must happen, but rarely how to make it happen). The best way to do this is to have a plan in place in case it is needed.

Secondly, the danger associated with a fall doesn't end even if the employee's harness and lanyard work properly. The employee's body weight places enormous pressure on the veins via the harness straps which causes blood to pool in the lower extremities, greatly reducing blood flow back to the heart and the brain. This is known as suspension trauma and can cause tissue damage, internal organ damage and failure, and ultimately death.

How exactly do we create a fall rescue plan? The first step is to recognize the fall hazard type and document your efforts to reduce or protect against the risk of falling on the JHA/JSA.

Second, determine how you will access the victim should they fall. Do you have a suitable ladder? Do you have a lift capable of reaching the correct height and a person that is capable of operating it? Document where these items are located if they are not in the immediate area.

What are the additional hazards around the area where the victim might be hanging? Electrical, thermal, chemical, mechanical; how will you deal with these?

Finally, who is in charge of what? Will one person be the designated rescuer, or is everyone capable and qualified? Who will call EMS?

By documenting the rescue plan, everyone involved will know exactly what to do in the event of a fall. Every decision that can be made prior to a fall happening should be decided and documented on the plan to reduce the time it takes in rescuing the victim.

Remember, in an emergency situation, mere seconds can be the difference between a minor emergency, and a catastrophe.

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