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Monday Minute

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Protecting Your Fall Protection

Is Your Anchor Point Safe?

What Is A Lifeline?

Lifelines function as an extension of an anchorage system, allowing an employee to move up and down (vertical lifeline) or back and forth (horizontal lifeline) across a work area. A sliding fitting (rope grab or shuttle) connects to the line and a lanyard connects the worker's harness to that sliding fitting.

Line strength can be reduced by as much as 70% due to the cutting action of an unprotected I – beam edge.
(Texas Dept. of Insurance, 2009)

Horizontal lifelines require special attention during design and installation to: (1) limit the distance the worker can fall (a greater sag in the line can mean a farther fall); and (2) minimize the forces on the connectors at the anchorage (a greater sag in the line can mean lower forces on the anchorage connectors at either end). A qualified person must supervise the horizontal lifeline's design, installation, and use (see 29 CFR 1926.502(d)(8)).

"Rarely is an impromptu anchor point perfect for fall protection."

Q: What is the minimum weight an anchor point must be able to hold? A: 5,000 pounds.

If you deal with personal fall arrest systems, you probably know this. Thankfully, most businesses and job sites have anchor points engineered into the environment for ready use. Sometimes, however, anchor points are needed where there aren't any. In situations such as this, anchor points can be installed for temporary use. Horizontal lifelines are one such example.

By attaching both ends of a lifeline to suitable anchor points (5,000 pounds) such as large pipes, I – beams, or ceiling joists, and ratcheting the line tight, a worker can tie off at any location along the line. This allows for greater flexibility of movement and worker location.

However, the line itself must be protected from damage. Rarely is an impromptu anchor point perfect for fall protection. Usually, there are hard or sharp edges, such as with beams, that must be protected against. In these instances, a softening device should be used.

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Softeners can be almost anything as long they can withstand repeated rubbing against a sharp edge, and prevent the lifeline from being damaged. Common examples include pieces of old fire hose, thick rubber matting, or commercially available softeners.

The cross strap of this horizontal lifeline shows significant damage due to being wrapped around an unprotected I-beam. This is a great example of where a softener should have been used.

Apply the softener to the anchor point, making sure to cover all exposed sharp, or hard edges. Then attach your strap.

Sling Corner Protectors make great softeners for hard edges.

By taking a few extra minutes to protect your equipment, you can insure that it will do its job when you need it to.

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