

Weekly Safety Tip – 4/26/10 – the ABCs of PFAS – II

Last week, we addressed the importance of using a Personal Fall Arrest System as a system for ensuring your own safety while working at heights. This week, we will spend a little more time on the ABCs – Anchor, Body Harness and Connector – the lanyard.

A – Anchor: There are two things you want to remember about an anchor. You want it (1) high enough and (2) strong enough. For most workers, the trigger point for requiring fall protection is 6 feet. If a person were 6 feet tall, standing on a work platform 6 feet from the ground, a PFAS would need to be attached _____ above them, to ensure they could stop before hitting the ground. And although I don't have the formula, it has been calculated that the anchor should be able to hold 5000 pounds. That's pretty substantial!

B- Body Harness: The key with body harnesses is to wear them high and tight rather than low and loose. By definition, someone falling is off balance. During a fall, a loose leg strap will end up somewhere you don't want and might find painful. A secondary B would be for Buddy System. You don't want to be left hanging in a body harness for too long. Even if you don't work in pairs, you want some method of communicating or someone checking on you.

C – Connector: Your connector is your lanyard. Too often, we see a lanyard that has been wrapped back on itself. But the lanyard works as a shock absorber – and when attached improperly, it can't do its job to absorb the shock of a fall and will fail. Attach the lanyard to the anchor using the manufacturer's recommendations.

Lastly, your PFAS is required to be inspected twice a year. But you should really give it a good going over every time you wear it. Something as life saving as a fall arrest system could use a quick inspection before use. Look for discolorations that could indicate decomposition of the material, fraying, or anything that might tell you that it's time for a repair or new PFAS.