FALL PROTECTION AWARENESS
ARE YOU COMPLIANT ?

Fall Protection is a complicated issue and one of the most important faced by an employer or a worksite supervisor. With over 100,000 reported incidents per year, falls from heights almost always result in serious injury. In the construction industry, falls are the number one cause of worker death. In 2007, 442 deaths were reported as a result of falling from heights. Falls result in millions of dollars of losses annually in lost work, insurance premiums and liability claims. The responsibility to prevent a catastrophe begins with the employer.

When we talk about Fall Protection, the image that often comes to mind is a worker using a full body harness connected to an anchor point with a lanyard, more specifically called a Personal Fall Arrest System (PFAS). PFAS are actually one of the later choices in a comprehensive fall protection program. Your first step should be trying to eliminate the fall hazard altogether. This may be accomplished with a modification to the job description work process and/or work area to eliminate the need to work at a height. These passive considerations utilize fall prevention systems such as guardrails, handrails, ladder cages, warning lines or fall restraint systems.

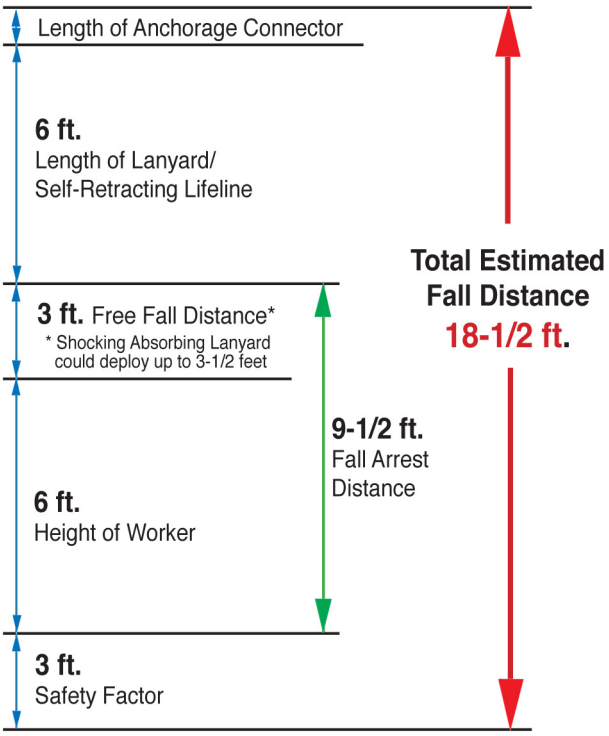
Did you realize that it only takes just over ½ second to free fall 6 feet, that's a blink of your eye, literally; and that you are traveling at 13 mph. In 2008 there were 336 construction deaths attributed from falling from heights.

The Fall Arrest Systems considered are designed to protect the worker after a fall from hitting the ground/lower level and/or obstructions below the work platform. Personal Fall Arrest Systems are Active Fall Protection methods that also require the participation of the worker.

So, WHY use fall protection? Well, it's not only common sense , it's the LAW ! OSHA Regulation 1926.501 Subpart M states that any employee walking or working 6 feet or more above the ground or lower level must be protected from falling by safety net, guard rail or fall arrest system. Personal Fall Arrest Systems are much more complex than passive systems and require detailed training to ensure the worker is using the system properly. The basics of every personal fall arrest system can be described as the ABCD's of fall arrest.

A-Anchorage means a secure point of attachment (to the structure) that supports the entire weight of the fall arrest system. Anchorage connectors provide a means of attaching the system to the anchorage.

B-Body Support is the full body harness that provides a connection point on the worker for the personal fall arrest system. Includes harnesses for Fall Arrest, Positioning, Suspension, & Retrieval This harness must properly fitted to evenly distribute the energy created in a fall.



Personal Fall Arrest System

The three key components of the Personal Fall Arrest System must be in place and properly used to provide maximum worker protection.

A

Anchorage/
Anchorage Connector

Anchorage Connector:
Used to join the connecting device to the anchorage (Ex: Cross-arm strap)

B

Body Wear

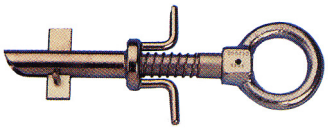
Body Wear: The personal protective equipment worn by the worker (Ex: full-body harness)

C **Connecting Device**

Connecting Device:
The critical link which connects the body wear to the anchor point.

(Ex: shock-absorbing lanyard (shown), or a retractable lifeline)

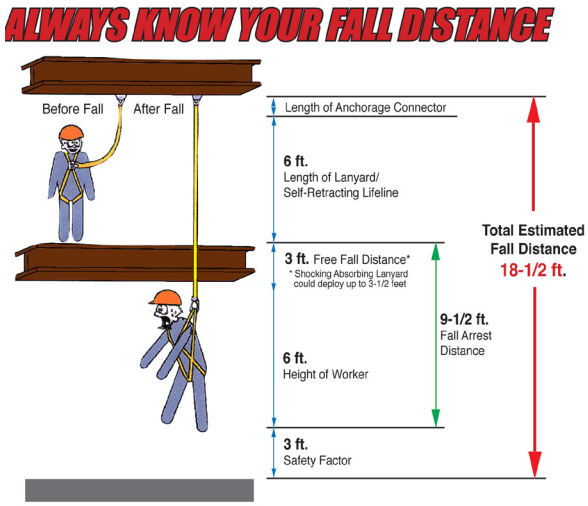
C-Connectors - devices used to connect the worker's full body harness to the anchor system. Connectors include lanyards, snap hooks, carabiners, deceleration devices, self-retracting lifelines, rope grabs and the like.



D- Decent & Rescue - the retrieval of a fallen worker or the self-rescue of workers is a necessary component of any fall protection program. OSHA requires that where a worker is exposed to the risk of a fall, a rescue plan must be in place for the self-rescue or retrieval of that fallen worker.

Calculating Fall Clearances

When setting up and using a personal fall arrest system, fall clearance and swing fall hazards are critical issues. Should a fall occur, there MUST be sufficient clearance below the user to safely arrest the fall and prevent the user from hitting the ground or any other object. The user of this equipment must determine if the system will arrest the fall within this available clearance. Some factors that affect this determination include anchorage location, type and length of connecting system (lanyard, retractable, rope grab) deceleration distance (the elongation of the decelerating device when deployed—allow 3.5'), worker height, movement of harness attachment element which should allow an additional safety factor of 2.5 more feet. Always calculate your fall distance before selecting your fall arrest equipment !



General rule of thumb suggests: