

HSE Toolbox Talk

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Fall Protection Q & As



WHAT EXACTLY IS 100% TIE-OFF?

Multiple definitions of the phrase “100% tie-off” or “100% fall protection” have recently been used. Do not assume there is any one correct definition. For some, 100% tie-off means wearing fall protection 100% of the time. For others, it means tying off your harness only after you get to the elevated work location. For many, it means **100% compliance where we require fall protection equipment to be utilized**. In most cases, double lanyards are required to facilitate 100% tie-off when moving at heights and transitioning between anchor points or lifelines. **Whenever the term 100% tie-off or 100% fall protection is used, make sure the specific requirements are clear.**

What if there is no place to tie off?

We don't always have a place to tie off while accessing equipment or pipe racks so we need to address the means to provide a tie-off as part of the work planning process. JLGs, scaffolds, and crane suspended personnel platforms may be an option if there are no tie-offs available. There are also many options on how to **provide temporary or permanent horizontal lifelines or anchor points**. Most fall protection equipment suppliers/vendors provide consulting services or have access to these services.

How do the yo-yos work?

Self retracting lanyards/lifelines are typically referred to as yo-yos. The self retracting line allows a person to ascend, descend or move freely across a work surface. However, **should that person fall, the lanyard (yo-yo) will arrest the fall**. The yo-yo also has an integral deceleration device which limits the fall arrest forces on the body. Therefore, **a shock absorbing lanyard (e.g. ripstitch) should not be used to connect a harness to a yo-yo**.

What about truck loading/unloading?

Falling from the top of trucks can be fatal. We are working with the carriers to see that their employees are adequately protected if they must access the top of their vehicle. While many of the more frequently used loading/unloading areas have a means to provide fall protection, many of the Texas City facilities do not have platforms or other fall protection provisions. A project is currently being initiated to address each location. **Whenever a means of fall protection is provided at a loading/unloading location, it must be utilized.**

Ladder access gates/bars:

When accessing a platform from a fixed ladder, there must be some type of self closing gate to prevent falls through the ladder opening. There are many different styles in place throughout the facilities. While swing gates with a top and mid rail are preferred, the key is to **maintain some type of ladder access barrier**.

At what height do stairways and platforms need rails?

While personal fall protection equipment is required to be worn when exposed to a 6 foot fall, stairways and platforms require rails at a lower height. **All open sided platforms 4 feet or higher must have a standard railing (top rail and mid rail) and all stairways with 4 or more risers must have top and mid rails.**

For more information, see your site's fall protection policies or contact Mark Garvin (409-945-1120).