5-minute safety talk

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF SAFETY

Personal Fall Protection Systems

Falls account for a large percentage of fatal and severe workplace injuries. Climbing poles, working on towers, and using aerial lifts increase the chance of injury for utility workers. It is important to know the proper safety devices, know how to inspect equipment, and be committed to following the fall protection program.

Aerial Lifts/Buckets

- Always use personal fall protection when working in an aerial lift or bucket. The boom could unexpectedly malfunction.
- Always keep your belt buckle inside the edge of the bucket.

Poles

- Weather changes may cause the pole to become slick.
- A longer-than-expected job may cause you to become tired and lose your grip.

Towers

- The climb up a tower can be very intense and exhausting.
- You may lose your footing and begin to slip.

Employers are obligated to provide maintenance utility workers with a written fall protection plan addressing known hazards, inspection and maintenance of equipment, suitable fall protection, and rescue procedures. This plan should be created by a qualified person who has extensive knowledge and training in fall protection, and executed by a competent person, or someone who is capable of identifying potential hazards and who has the authority to correct them.

The necessary components of a personal fall arrest system

Anchorage: A secure point of attachment for lifelines, lanyards, or deceleration devices capable of withstanding a 5,000 pound static force.

Connector: A device used to couple (connect) part of the personal fall arrest system and positioning device systems together. It may be an independent component of the system such as a carabiner, or an integral component part of the system such as a buckle, D-ring, or a positive double-locking double-acting snap-hook.

Positioning Device: A device permiting the worker the use of both hands while working on a utility pole. This device is allowed only if the potential fall hazard is limited to 2 feet. If the fall hazard is more than 2 feet, a body harness and fall arrest system must also be used.

Body Harness: Straps secured about the employee to distribute the fall arrest forces over the thighs, pelvis, waist, chest, and shoulders with means for attaching it to other components of a personal fall arrest system.

Components of a personal fall arrest system also include:

Lanyard: A flexible line of rope, wire rope, or strap that has a connector at each end for connecting the body harness to a deceleration device, lifeline, or anchorage. Some lanyards have built-in deceleration capability. Wire rope is not allowed as a lanyard unless it is used with a separate deceleration device.

Deceleration Device: Any mechanism, such as a lanyard or connected mechanical device, which limits the amount of energy imposed on an employee during fall arrest.

Lifeline: A component consisting of a flexible line for connection to an anchorage at one end to hang vertically or for connection to anchorages at both ends to stretch horizontally, and which connects other components of a personal fall arrest system, such as a lanyard, to the anchorage.

Fall protection begins with proper training.

OSHA requires employers to provide training programs for workers who may be exposed to fall hazards. The training must be conducted by a competent person and should address the following topics:

- The nature of fall hazards in the work area
- The correct procedures for inspecting and maintaining fall protection systems
- The use and operation of fall protection systems
- The limitations of fall protection systems
- The role of workers in the fall protection plan
- When a personal fall arrest system is necessary
- The type of personal fall arrest system needed
- How the fall arrest system works and is worn
- Proper maintenance of the fall arrest system

You are the person most responsible for your own safety. Don't make excuses when your life is on the line.

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