

SAFETY TALK

[suspended access equipment – fall protection]

Suspended access equipment includes swingstages, work cages, and boatswain's (bosun's) chairs.

The basic rule is simple: there must be two independent means of support for workers using this equipment.

Two Independent Means of Support

One independent means of support is the suspension system of the swingstage, cage, or chair. This usually consists of:

- Climbers
- Suspension lines
- Outrigger beams
- Tiebacks
- Anchors
- Counterweights

The second independent means of support for each worker is a fall-arresting system. This consists of a:

- Full body harness
- Lanyard
- Lifeline
- Rope grab
- Anchor

If the suspension system fails, the worker will be saved by the fall-arresting system.

A second independent means of support for swingstages and cages can also be another complete suspension system. On a swingstage, for instance, there could be four outrigger beams instead of two, four suspension lines instead of two, and so on. If one suspension system fails, the other will take over. This arrangement is used on a tiered stage.

Even with two complete suspension systems, you still have to wear a full body harness and lanyard. In this case, you would tie off to the swingstage.

Fall-Arresting System Inspection

[This part of the talk should include hands-on inspection of equipment.]

If all else fails, your fall-arrest equipment is your last line of defence. Make sure it works.

Check your harness for the following:

- Approval by CSA (Canadian Standards Association).
- Damage to straps and fasteners.
- The lanyard must be securely attached to the D-ring by an eye splice and thimble, a locking snap-hook, or a locking carabiner. The lanyard must fall between the shoulder blades.
- The lanyard and shock absorber must be free of damage.

Make sure your rope grab is secured upright, working, installed correctly to the lifeline, and has no damaged parts or sharp edges that could cut the lifeline.

Your lanyard should be secured to the rope grab with a locking snap-hook or a locking carabiner to keep it from accidentally coming out.

Your lifeline must be the size and type specified by the rope grab manufacturer and free of damage, wear, and decay. It should be protected from rubbing and scraping where it passes over corners or edges.

In New Brunswick, the law regarding fall-arresting systems and suspended work platforms can be found in *Regulation 91-191* under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, sections 49-50 and 141-145.