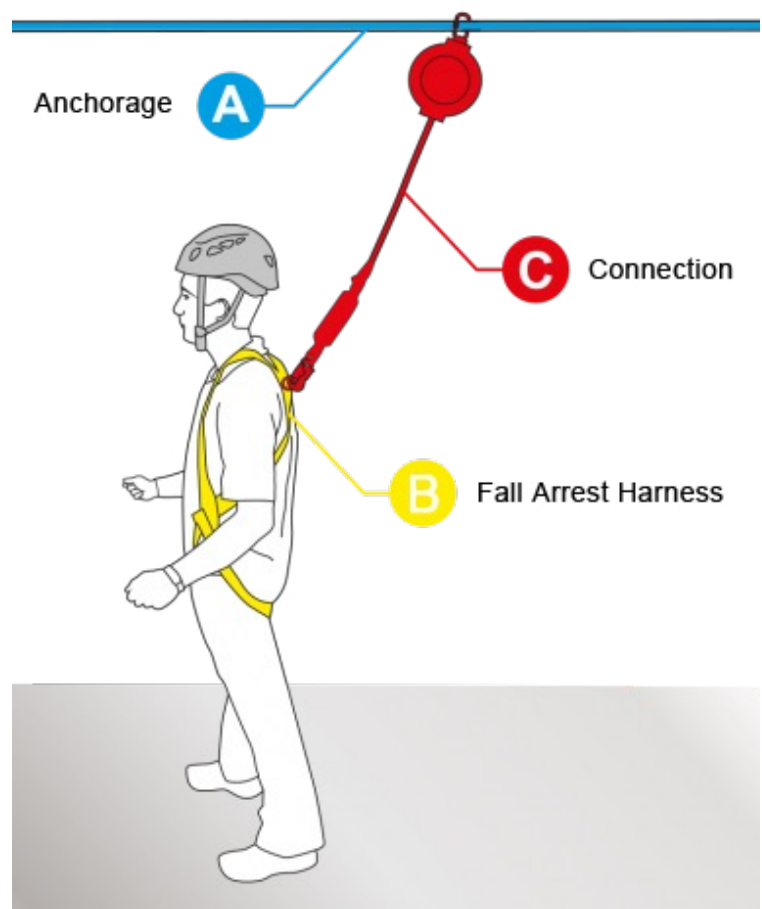


The ABCDs of Fall Protection

The range of personal fall protection equipment on offer is so large that it can sometimes be overwhelming to decide which systems to choose to keep employees safe while they're working at heights. The correct equipment, training and supervision is vital, and the sheer number of options can lead to situations where companies either procure too little (covering the bare minimum) or too much (hoping that the correct choice is in the mix somewhere).

Luckily, there is a simple tool for dispelling this confusion - the ABCDs of fall protection. These are the elements that make up any fall arrest system and which must always be in place to perform work at heights safely.



ANCHORAGE

A

An anchorage is defined as a secure point of attachment for the selected connecting device. The type of anchorage best suited to the job will be determined by various factors. These include the type of work to be performed, the industry, as well as the available substrates to connect to. Importantly, the anchorage point as well as the anchorage structure must be of a sufficient strength to handle the forces exerted on it in the event of a fall incident.

Examples of secure anchorages are:

- A permanent weight bearing portion of a structure.
- An installed, tested and certified anchor point for single-person use.
- A tested and certified tripod (the same kind used in confined spaces).

BODY SUPPORT

B

Body support, in the form of a full body harness designed to evenly distribute forces should the wearer fall. Well-designed harnesses can be worn for longer periods of time, ensuring workers feel comfortable and are therefore able to be more focused and productive.

Harnesses are manufactured to various standards, depending on their capabilities and performance ratings.

Examples some of the various harnesses available are:

- Fall Arrest
- Rope Access
- Confined Space

It is important to select equipment that is not only suited to the task, but also easy to use and adjust, allowing workers to customise their fit and also get in and out quickly.

CONNECTION

C

The connector is the component or piece of equipment that connects the harness to the anchor point, also known as a fall arrest/fall restraint device.

Connecting to the anchor is done for two main reasons:

1. **Slowing and stopping falls** - should a worker happen to fall, the connection to the anchor point prevents them from reaching the ground.
2. **Restraint system** - a correctly adjusted and shortened lanyard keeps workers within a safe area and prevents potential fall situations.

Examples of fall arrest devices used to connect to anchors include:

- Double shock absorbing lanyards
- Retractable lanyards/lifelines
- Mobile fall arrestors used together with a rope and anchor strap (vertical lifeline system)

DESCENT AND RESCUE

D

Rescue planning is an integral part of any fall protection system. Descending devices are a key element here, and can be used in a vast array of configurations to either hoist (lift) or lower a fallen worker to safety. The configuration and use of these devices should only be conducted after rigorous training and practice.

Outside of more standard applications, there are some specific factors that may need to be considered when selecting equipment to be used in the fall arrest system. Examples could be hot works

in the construction field, which require specialised flame-retardant, heat resistant equipment. In the utilities industry, workers may be exposed to potential arc flashes, which needs to be taken into account.

Regardless of any additional considerations, however, knowing the basics of a fall arrest system through the ABCDs allows for easy identification and selection of the appropriate equipment to keep workers safe while working in elevated positions.