

ABCs of Personal Fall Arrest Systems - Anchorages

Falls are a common type of accident in the workplace and can result in serious injuries. As such, it's important to take precautions when working at heights.

Personal fall arrest systems consist of three separate elements—anchorages, body harnesses and connecting devices—which can be remembered by thinking of A, B and C.

“A” is for Anchorages

As its name would suggest, an anchorage is an anchor point to which employees working at heights are tethered. Anchorages act as the counterweight to workers should they fall. Therefore, they must be strong and sturdy enough to reliably catch and support the body weight of the attached worker.

OSHA requires that all anchorages be designed, installed and used while under the supervision of a qualified employee. In order to ensure that the equipment can catch and hold a falling worker, anchorages must be able to support two times the expected impacted load or 5,000 pounds for each worker attached to the anchor.

Additionally, the material to which anchorages are attached must also be reliable. Certain building materials may not be strong enough to support an anchorage if a large amount of weight is suddenly applied. As a general rule of thumb, it is best to choose the strongest available material when selecting an anchorage, such as steel.

Some examples of equipment and structures that should never be used as anchorages in a personal fall arrest system include:

- Standard guardrails
- Standard railings
- Ladders/rungs
- Scaffolding
- Light fixtures
- Conduit or plumbing
- Ductwork or pipe vents
- Wiring harnesses
- Rebar
- Lanyards
- Vents
- Fans
- Roof stacks

Inspections

Anchorages are critical parts of personal fall arrest systems. If an anchorage is defective or deficient, it can result in serious accidents and injuries. An issue with an anchorage can mean the difference between life and death. If there is ever any doubt that an anchorage can provide the necessary safety, have a qualified individual inspect and evaluate it.

Our Commitment to You

Your safety is our first priority. If you have any questions or concerns about anchorages or personal fall arrest systems, talk to your supervisor or a qualified fall protection employee.

