Fall Prevention - Fall Arrest Full Body Harnesses - Do's and Don'ts

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Falls from one level to another are among the leading causes of severe injuries and death among workers in the United States. Many workers who were injured or killed were wearing a full body harness as part of a personal fall arrest system, but their full body harness was not properly worn or adjusted, and it failed to work. So today we will review some important tips to remember when you wear a full body harness:

Only wear a body harness that a Competent Person has determined to be the right size for your body. Wearing a harness that is too big subjects you to injuries caused by straps that are improperly positioned, or you might even slip out of your harness and fall. Conversely, wearing a harness that is too small is very uncomfortable, tempting you to loosen or unhook buckles, which could lead to failure of the harness to arrest your fall.

When adjusting your full body fall arrest harness, make certain that the D-ring on back, where your lanyard attaches, is centered evenly between your shoulder blades.

Also make sure the chest strap in front is properly positioned across your chest and snug. If it is positioned too low or too loose, your body could be thrust forward when you hit the end of your lanyard during a fall, causing you to roll forward and out of your harness. Conversely, the chest strap could be yanked up into your throat if it is positioned too high on your chest. Also, adjust your shoulder straps to fit snugly so they don’t slip off.

Always make sure the leg straps are positioned properly, below your buttocks.

Take the time to confirm that every buckle on your harness is properly adjusted and fully engaged, and that any loose ends of straps are tucked into retainers when provided. Leaving just one buckle loose or unbuckled could lead to failure of the harness to safely arrest your fall.

When properly adjusted, you should only be able to fit two fingers of your flat hand between your body and the straps on your harness.

Finally, every time you put on your full body harness, make certain that it is ALL the way on, connected, and properly adjusted, and leave it that way until you are ready to take it ALL the way off. That is because if you loosen or disconnect any part of your harness for even a short time, such as at a rest break or lunch, you might forget to make needed readjustments or reattachments when you are ready to resume work.

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