

Key Considerations for Inspecting Fall Protection Equipment

Inspecting fall protection equipment is a key component of a fall protection program. Proper inspection of fall protection equipment verifies the equipment is in good working condition and capable of protecting employees if an incident occurs. Faulty or damaged equipment may not adequately protect employees from falls.

Your inspection process needs to adhere with all Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards, American National Standards Institute (ANSI) guidance, Service-specific regulations, and manufacturer guidelines. This one pager provides direction on inspection training as well as what to look for and how to perform inspections of fall protection equipment.

INSPECTION TRAINING

OSHA requires inspection of personal fall protection equipment during each work shift before initial use or each use for construction wear. In addition, a trained and designated competent person needs to inspect personal fall protection at least annually or before a repaired piece of equipment returns to service. Train employees using personal fall protection on:

- The designated competent person
- The components of their equipment
- Items to look for during an inspection
- How often to conduct inspections
- Steps to remove damaged, defective, or deteriorated components from service
- Where and how to get new equipment, if needed
- Methods to document the results of completed inspections
- Results of the annual fall protection program inspection.



Image retrieved from [Atlantic Training](#)

MAINTENANCE, SERVICING, AND STORAGE TRAINING

Train employees on the proper maintenance, servicing, and storage of fall protection equipment, too. Instruct employees to follow manufacturer's guidance on cleaning and storage of fall protection to maintain safe, functional equipment. Make sure employees know to:

- Store equipment in a cool, dry, clean environment, out of direct sunlight
- Clean fall protection equipment with water and a mild soap solution
- Wipe off hardware with a clean, dry cloth and hang to air dry.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR FALL PROTECTION EQUIPMENT INSPECTION

Inspection processes should be complex, looking at every component of the equipment and ensuring equipment is free from: mildew and mold, wear, damage, deformations, defective or inoperable components, and other deterioration. Look for the following items during your inspections:

Inspect the Labels

- All labels, tags, and markings intact and legible

Inspect the Hardware

- Make sure all hardware (e.g., buckles, D-rings, back pad, loop keepers) is intact
- Examine all hardware for wear and tear
- Look for broken, missing, or distorted buckles, eyelets, and D-rings
- Look for damage (e.g., burns, sharp edges, cracks, corrosion)
- Ensure release tabs on buckles work freely and click when the buckle engages
- Ensure PVC-coated parts are free of cuts, rips, tears, and holes

Inspect the Function

- Test the function and design of the equipment
- Determine if the equipment will function as it is designed to function

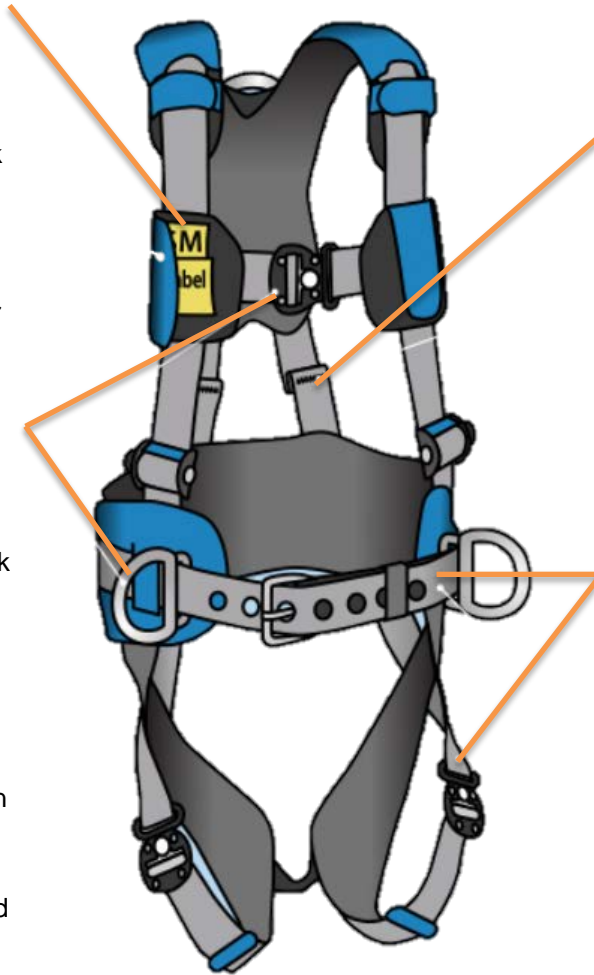


Image and some text
retrieved from [Oregon OSHA](https://www.oregon.gov/OSHA/Pages/default.aspx)

Inspect the Stitching

- Look for pulled, frayed, cut, or broken stitches (indication harness has been subjected to a fall)
- Look specifically at the loop stitch/impact indicator to ensure it is not broken (a special stitch pattern placed there by the manufacturer that unravels in the case of impact loading)

Inspect the Webbing

- Look for frayed, cut, or broken fibers
- Look for other signs of damage: tears, abrasions, mold, burns, or discoloration from ultraviolet light and corrosive chemicals
- Ensure webbing is free of knots, soiling, paint buildup, and rust staining

Manufacturer Guidance

- Check manufacturer recommendations to be sure you are not missing anything during the inspection

Remember, you need to immediately remove from service any equipment not passing inspection. If the equipment cannot be repaired or it appears the equipment was involved in an impact load event, it needs properly repaired or discarded and replaced. Be sure to follow your organization's process for documenting the completion of inspections.

For additional information on the SMCX's services, please visit the SMCX-hosted website at: <https://www.smcx.org/>.