

OSHA Training Toolbox Talk: Fall Prevention – Lanyards for Fall Arrest Systems - Do's and Don'ts

[Reference 1910 Subpart D / 1926 Subpart M]

A lanyard is obviously an extremely important part of a fall arrest or fall prevention system. So here are a few safety tips related to the selection, use, and care of your fall protection lanyard:

- Make sure the lanyard you select for the job is made out of the right material for the job you will be performing. While a lanyard made of rope or synthetic materials are okay for many jobs, they may not be suitable for use if you are performing work around sharp-edged materials that could cause cuts, or if you are welding or torch cutting, as the heat and sparks generated could cause damage to the lanyard. Conversely, a wire cable lanyard, which might be more suitable for use around sharp-edged materials or heat and spark-producing operations, would not be okay to use if you are working around live electrical conductors.
- Ensure the lanyard you are using is the right length for the job. Generally speaking, the shorter the lanyard, the better, as a shorter lanyard will reduce your total free fall distance. And that helps reduce the shock load, or jolt, generated and transferred to your body when you hit the end of the lanyard.
- When using a lanyard with a shock-absorbing pouch, be sure the end of the lanyard with the pouch is attached to your body harness D-ring. This helps make sure the deceleration device can fully deploy if the lanyard should get hung on something when you fall.
- Keep control of the loose end of the lanyard when you are not connected to an anchor point. Many injuries occur when a worker trips over the loose end of their own lanyard while walking around. And in other cases, workers have been injured because the loose end of their lanyard gets tangled up with a nearby moving object, such as a rotating pulley or a load being moved by material handling equipment. Always keep the loose end of the lanyard in your hand if making a short commute, or attach the loose end of the lanyard to a designated attachment point on your body harness during longer periods.
- Never, for any reason, tie a knot in a lanyard. Doing so actually reduces the strength of the lanyard, in some cases by almost 50 percent! And if you find that your lanyard was accidentally knotted while being stored, untie the knot before using the lanyard.
- Last but not least, avoid storing your lanyard where it could be damaged by exposure to chemicals, direct sunlight and high heat, and sharp materials that could cause cuts or punctures. And be sure to inspect your lanyard for damage of any type before each use, and immediately get a replacement if damage is discovered.

Does anyone have any other safety tips regarding lanyards that you would like to share with us today? Thank you for your participation, and please be sure to sign your name on the training certification form so you will get credit for attending today's toolbox training session.