Commercial Building Window Washing Fall Protection Rigging Check

1.0 Objective & Intent

The objective of this Safe Operating Procedure (SOP) is to establish a mandatory, verifiable rigging check protocol for all commercial building window washing operations that require fall protection. This procedure is designed to prevent serious injury or death from falls, which are the leading cause of fatalities in the building maintenance sector. Compliance with WorkSafeBC OHS Regulation Part 11 (Fall Protection) and Part 13 (Ladders, Scaffolds, and Temporary Work Platforms) is mandatory. This SOP mitigates the specific risk of catastrophic rigging failure due to improper setup, damaged equipment, or inadequate anchor points.

2.0 Operational Scope

This procedure applies to all personnel involved in commercial window washing operations, including supervisors, lead washers, and any workers who will be suspended or working at heights exceeding 3 meters (10 feet) where guardrails are not present. It covers all types of fall protection rigging systems used on commercial buildings, including but not limited to: single-point anchor systems, horizontal lifelines, vertical lifelines, and suspended scaffold (bosun's chair) rigging. This SOP applies to all buildings under contract, regardless of height, and must be performed at the start of each shift and whenever rigging is reconfigured.

3.0 Hazard Identification & Mandatory PPE

- Fall from Height: Primary hazard from anchor failure, lanyard disconnect, or improper harness fit.
- Swing Fall: Lateral movement during a fall causing collision with building structure or sharp edges.
- Anchor Point Failure: Corrosion, improper installation, or load rating below 5000 lbs per worker.
- Lanyard & Lifeline Damage: Cuts, abrasions, chemical exposure, or UV degradation reducing strength.
- Suspended Scaffold Rigging Failure: Rope wear, carabiner gate failure, or improper knot tying.
- CSA-Approved Full Body Harness with dorsal D-ring (must be inspected and within service life).
- Double-leg shock-absorbing lanyard with snap hooks (minimum 5000 lb gate strength).
- CSA-Approved Hard Hat with chin strap (rated for impact and penetration).
- CSA-Approved Steel Toed Boots with slip-resistant soles.
- Cut-resistant gloves (ANSI A4 or higher) for handling ropes and cables.
- High-visibility vest (Class 2 or 3) when working near traffic or pedestrian areas.

4.0 Required Safety Equipment & Tools

- Certified fall protection anchor point (rated to 5000 lbs per worker, with current inspection tag).
- Personal fall arrest system (PFAS) including full body harness, shock-absorbing lanyard, and self-retracting lifeline (SRL) if required.
- Rigging inspection checklist (company-specific, laminated for field use).
- Torque wrench (calibrated) for verifying anchor bolt torque specifications.
- Inspection mirror and flashlight for visual inspection of anchor points and hardware.

- Rope grab or descent control device (certified for the rope diameter in use).
- Spare carabiners (locking, steel, rated to 5000 lbs minimum).
- Edge protection pads (for lifelines running over sharp edges).
- Communication device (two-way radio or cell phone) for emergency contact.
- First aid kit (Level 1, WSBC compliant) and rescue plan documentation.

5.0 Step-by-Step Safety Procedure

1. Conduct a pre-use safety meeting with all team members. Review the specific building rigging plan, identify all anchor points, and confirm the rescue plan for the work location. No work shall proceed until every worker can verbalize the rescue procedure.
2. Visually inspect all personal fall arrest equipment (harness, lanyard, SRL, carabiners) for damage, wear, corrosion, or expired service life. Check harness webbing for cuts, fraying, or chemical burns. Ensure all labels and tags are legible and within the manufacturer's date of manufacture. Reject any equipment that fails inspection and tag it 'Do Not Use'.
3. Locate and verify the designated anchor point(s). Confirm the anchor point is rated for a minimum 5000 lbs per worker (or 2:1 safety factor for engineered systems). Check for visible corrosion, cracks, or deformation. If the anchor point is a structural beam, ensure the sling or strap is wrapped around the beam and not the edge. Use a torque wrench to verify any bolted anchors meet the manufacturer's specified torque.
4. Inspect all rigging hardware (carabiners, snap hooks, D-rings) for proper gate function and locking mechanism. Ensure all gates are self-closing and self-locking. Check for bent gates, cracked bodies, or worn hinge pins. Do not use any hardware that does not close and lock fully without force.
5. If using a horizontal lifeline (HLL) system, inspect the entire length of the cable or webbing for damage, kinks, or fraying. Verify that the HLL is tensioned to the manufacturer's specifications and that all intermediate supports are secure. Check that the HLL is not in contact with sharp edges or abrasive surfaces.
6. If using a vertical lifeline or rope descent system, inspect the rope for cuts, abrasions, chemical damage, or excessive wear. Run the rope through a gloved hand to feel for inconsistencies. Verify the rope diameter matches the rope grab or descent device. Ensure the rope is protected from sharp edges with edge pads.
7. Don the full body harness and adjust all straps so that the dorsal D-ring sits between the shoulder blades and the leg straps are snug but not restrictive. Perform a buddy check: have a coworker verify all buckles are fastened, webbing is not twisted, and the harness fits correctly. Attach the lanyard to the dorsal D-ring.
8. Connect the lanyard snap hook to the anchor point or lifeline. Ensure the snap hook is fully closed and locked. Perform a tug test: apply a firm pull to confirm the connection is secure. Do not tie knots in the lanyard or attach to the anchor point with a carabiner that is not locking.
9. Before stepping off the edge or into the suspended position, perform a final system check. Confirm that the lanyard is attached to the correct anchor, the anchor is verified, the harness is snug, and all tools are secured. Communicate clearly with the ground crew that you are ready to begin work.
10. Document the rigging check on the company inspection checklist. Record the date, time, anchor point location, equipment serial numbers, and any deficiencies found. Sign and date the form. If any equipment was rejected, note the reason and the action taken (e.g., removed from service). File the checklist in the project safety binder.