
Fall Protection Harness & Lanyard Annual Competent Person Inspection

1.0 Objective & Intent

This SOP establishes the mandatory annual inspection protocol for all personal fall protection harnesses and lanyards used within the cabinet and millwork manufacturing facility. The primary objective is to identify and remove from service any equipment that exhibits wear, damage, deformation, corrosion, or other defects that could compromise its structural integrity or performance during a fall event.

Compliance with this procedure is required under WorkSafeBC Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (OHSR) Part 11 – Fall Protection, specifically Section 11.6 which mandates that all fall protection equipment be inspected by a competent person at least annually. Failure to conduct and document these inspections exposes the company to significant regulatory fines and, more critically, places workers at risk of catastrophic injury or death from equipment failure.

This SOP mitigates the specific risk of latent, undetected damage to fall protection equipment that can occur from daily use, exposure to chemicals (e.g., wood finishes, solvents, adhesives), UV degradation, and mechanical abrasion from contact with sharp edges of millwork materials and machinery.

2.0 Operational Scope

This procedure applies to all full-body harnesses, shock-absorbing lanyards, self-retracting lifelines (SRLs), and associated connecting hardware (snap hooks, carabiners, D-rings) owned by the company and used by any personnel for tasks performed at heights of 3 metres (10 feet) or greater, or where fall protection is required by regulation. This includes, but is not limited to, maintenance work on overhead conveyors, roof access for HVAC or skylight repairs, loading dock operations, and any elevated work on scaffolding or aerial lifts.

The inspection must be conducted by a designated competent person as defined by WorkSafeBC – an individual who is capable of identifying existing and predictable hazards in the surroundings or working conditions, and who has authorization to take prompt corrective measures. This person must have completed formal training on fall protection equipment inspection and be familiar with the manufacturer's instructions for each specific make and model of equipment being inspected.

This SOP does not cover pre-use inspections, which are the responsibility of each worker before every use, nor does it cover the inspection of anchorage connectors, horizontal lifelines, or structural anchors. Those are covered under separate SOPs.

3.0 Hazard Identification & Mandatory PPE

- Cut Hazard: Sharp edges on D-rings, buckles, and hardware can cause lacerations to hands during handling and inspection.
- Pinch Point: Snap hook gates and carabiner locking mechanisms can pinch fingers if not handled carefully.
- Chemical Exposure: Residual wood dust, finishing chemicals, or adhesives on equipment may cause skin irritation or allergic reaction.
- Ergonomic Strain: Repetitive handling and visual inspection of multiple units can cause eye strain and upper body fatigue.
- CSA-Approved Safety Glasses with side shields (mandatory for all inspection tasks).
- Cut-Resistant Gloves (ANSI A4 level or higher) to protect against sharp hardware edges.
- Closed-toe, slip-resistant footwear (CSA Green Patch recommended).
- Dust mask or N95 respirator if equipment is heavily contaminated with airborne particulates.

4.0 Required Safety Equipment & Tools

- Manufacturer's inspection checklist or generic competent person inspection form (printed or digital on tablet).
- Bright, adjustable task light (LED inspection light with magnifier recommended).
- Clean, lint-free cloths for wiping equipment.
- Small mirror (dental-style) for inspecting hard-to-see areas of hardware.
- Calibrated measuring tape or ruler (metric and imperial).
- Digital camera or smartphone for documenting defects (photos required for records).
- Red "DANGER – DO NOT USE" tags and zip ties for quarantining failed equipment.
- Designated quarantine bin or area clearly marked for failed equipment.
- Pen, permanent marker, and clipboard (if using paper forms).

5.0 Step-by-Step Safety Procedure

1. Prepare the inspection area: Ensure the inspection station is clean, well-lit, and free of clutter. Lay out a clean, dry, non-abrasive surface (e.g., a clean workbench or a plastic tarp) to place the equipment. Gather all required tools and forms. Verify that the competent person conducting the inspection is not fatigued and has no distractions.
2. Collect and identify all fall protection equipment to be inspected. Retrieve all harnesses, lanyards, and SRLs from their storage locations. For each item, record the unique identifier (serial number, asset tag, or manufacturer's lot number) on the inspection form. Verify that the equipment has not exceeded its manufacturer's maximum service life (typically 5 years from date of manufacture for synthetic webbing, but verify per manufacturer).
3. Perform a visual inspection of all webbing and straps. Examine the entire length of all webbing on both sides, paying close attention to areas near buckles, D-rings, and adjustment points. Look for: cuts, tears, fraying, abrasion, pulled or broken stitches, discoloration from chemical or UV exposure, mold or mildew, and any signs of heat or chemical damage (hardening, melting, or glazing). Use the magnifying light to inspect suspicious areas. Measure any damage: cuts longer than 3 mm (1/8 inch) or fraying that exposes more than 10% of the thread width constitutes failure.
4. Inspect all hardware components (D-rings, buckles, snap hooks, carabiners, adjusters). Check for: cracks, distortion, corrosion, sharp edges, burrs, worn or damaged locking mechanisms, and proper gate operation. For snap hooks and carabiners, verify that the gate closes and locks fully without binding. Apply light pressure to the gate to check for spring tension. Any hardware that does not operate smoothly or shows any visible defect must be failed. Use the mirror to inspect the inside of D-rings and the back of buckles.
5. Inspect all energy-absorbing elements (shock packs, tear-webbing, SRL lifelines). For lanyards with a shock pack, check the outer cover for cuts or abrasion. Gently squeeze the pack to feel for any hard or uneven spots that could indicate internal damage. For SRLs, pull the lifeline out fully and inspect the entire length for cuts, fraying, or kinks. Verify that the SRL retracts fully and smoothly. Check the SRL housing for cracks or dents. For cable lifelines, inspect for broken strands (birdcaging) or corrosion.
6. Inspect all labels and markings. Verify that the manufacturer's label is present, legible, and securely attached. The label must include: manufacturer name, model number, serial number, date of manufacture, and relevant standards (CSA Z259.10, ANSI, etc.). If the label is missing or illegible, the equipment must be removed from service. Record the date of manufacture and compare to the maximum service life.
7. Document all findings on the inspection form. For each item, clearly mark PASS or FAIL. For any failed item, take clear digital photographs of the defect from multiple angles. Attach a red "DANGER – DO NOT USE" tag to the failed equipment using a zip tie, and immediately place it in the designated quarantine bin. Complete the inspection form with the competent person's signature, date, and any relevant notes. Ensure the form includes a section for the corrective action taken (e.g., "Removed from service and scheduled for disposal").
8. Complete the annual inspection record. Transfer the inspection results to the master equipment log (digital or paper). For all passed equipment, update the next inspection due date to one year from the current date. For failed equipment, initiate the disposal process per the company's equipment retirement procedure (cut webbing to prevent reuse, and dispose of hardware as scrap metal). File all inspection forms and photographs in the designated safety records folder, retaining them for at least the service life of the equipment plus one year.

Regulatory Disclaimer: This document is a generic safety template provided for educational and informational purposes only. It does not constitute professional engineering, legal, or regulatory compliance advice. The end-user assumes all liability for validating all safety protocols against specific machinery manufacturer manuals and local occupational health and safety regulations (e.g., WorkSafeBC, CSA standards) before deployment.