

Great Western Painting

Safety Meeting

Note: Our company conducts scheduled safety meetings to focus attention on one major safety topic per meeting. Should an employee have a question on any subject related to safety or job procedure, it will be addressed by the person conducting the meeting.

Tethering Tools and Equipment

Dropping a wrench or screwdriver to the floor is, at most, a minor annoyance. Dropping that same wrench or screwdriver from 10 feet, 20 feet, 100 feet becomes progressively more hazardous to those below. In reality, it becomes missile which can cause destruction for both life and property.

When performing tasks at an elevated work area, tools and equipment can slip out of your hands, fall through guard rails, zip through debris nets and smash to the lower level.

As a point of interest, safety nets are designed to protect persons from falling though they can catch job site scrap and equipment. With an allowable mesh size of 6 inches by 6 inches, safety nets are not designed to stop small falling hazardous items from passing through them.

Tethering of tools and equipment is substantially more complex than just tying a lanyard to each piece of tool or equipment. Consideration must be given to type of tether, anchorage points, ease of use.

For personal tools, a lanyard attached between a tool belt and the tool is appropriate. Never use your clothing belt loop as an attachment point – it certainly is not designed as an anchor point would almost certainly fail under the slightest stress.

Retractable and coiled tethers may be annoying and reduce work efficiency if you have to push against them to get you work done. The tether must be securely mounted to the tool or equipment and the anchorage point. The actual length of the tether and the coiling and/or ability of the tether to retract is a personal choice.

For very heavy tools or items of equipment, consideration should be given to anchoring them to an actual structure with, or course, and appropriate lanyard to handle the weight.

All workers are aware that guardrails on elevated surfaces protect persons from falling and 4" toe boards are designed to keep objects from falling. As a reminder, when working from an aerial lift, you must stand firmly on the floor of the basket or cage and use an approved fall restraint system. In spite of that, tools and objects can slip and fall from one's hands when being used or carried. Remember, even a cell phone dropped from height can be very dangerous to those below.

Just as in human fall arrest systems, tool arrest systems, tethers and anchorage points, should be inspected and replaced if subjected to a substantial arrest incident. The advantage of having personal tools tethered is that if they drop, they are immediately retrievable and work can go on essentially uninterrupted.

If tools and equipment are altered on the job to accept a lanyard, care must be taken to ensure the tool or equipment is not structurally or functionally damaged. Never tether tools or equipment by hoses, chords, or battery packs. The tool or equipment will break free from these attachment points and fall to the ground.

An additional benefit of tethering tools and equipment, beyond the obvious safety concerns, is tool and equipment security. A tethered item will not "accidentally" disappear.