



TAKE 5

Five Minute Safety Talks

Fall Protection: Suspension Trauma

Suspension Trauma

Prolonged suspension in a body harness can result in serious physical injury or even death. When a worker hangs in a body harness the straps put pressure on each leg's veins. This compresses the veins reducing blood flow to the heart. Blood flow to the heart will slow if the leg muscles do not contract. This can result in unconsciousness or event death in as little as 30 minutes.

Preventing Suspension Trauma

Workers can prevent suspension trauma by:

- Using equipment, such as aerial lifts, to perform work at heights.
- Identifying and implementing fall restraint. Fall restraint eliminates the likelihood of a fall.
- Never working alone while using a personal fall protection system.
- Staging rescue equipment, such as a ladder or aerial lifts, near work at heights.
- Pumping the legs, similar to riding a bike, while suspended in a body harness. This activates the leg muscles, increasing blood flow to the heart.
- Equipping fall protection body harnesses with suspension trauma straps. The straps allow the worker to remain upright. This activates the leg muscles, reduces blood from pooling in the legs, and restores blood blow to the heart.
- Developing a fall rescue plan. Rescuing a worker quickly can prevent suspension trauma. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires that employers provide for "prompt rescue of employees in the event of a fall." Prompt rescue may require an in-house rescue team or first responders. Rescuers utilize equipment such as ladders, rope rescue systems, and aerial lifts to rescue suspended workers.
- Handling unconscious workers carefully. The lethal surge of blood returning to heart is called reflow syndrome. Reflow syndrome occurs when a worker is removed from the harness and placed flat on their back. Rescuers must keep the worker's upper torso upright at least 30-40 degrees. The worker can be positioned flat on their back over a 45-minute period.



Image Courtesy of 3M

Remember, safety doesn't have to be difficult, simple steps, such as educating workers on suspension trauma, can prevent serious injuries and save lives.

*To learn more about our online training, contact us
at 844-8SAFETY or info@safetymadesimple.com.*

Date Presented: _____

Name of Presenter: _____

Acknowledgement:

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Group Discussion Notes/Comments:

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