

Spot The Safety Violation: Wearing Fall Protection Isn't Enough



This worker is wearing a fall protection harness. But what did he forget to do that's undermining his safety'



In general, if your workers are exposed to falls of three metres or more, you must provide adequate fall protection for them. The [preference under the OHS laws](#) is to use engineering controls such as guardrails. But if those aren't practicable, the next choice is fall restraint or fall arrest systems.

But just providing safety belts, full body harnesses and the like to workers isn't enough. You must also ensure that workers are trained on the proper use of this PPE and actually use it when required.

For example, fully body harnesses, such as the one worn by the worker in this picture, will only protect a worker if they're tied off or secured to an anchor point. Because this worker's harness isn't connected to a lifeline or other anchor, it's doing nothing to prevent him from falling off the roof or, if he does fall, to stop him before he hits the ground.

When workers don't use fall protection, your company could be fined for an OHS violation'but it's not alone. Workers who don't properly wear the fall protection you provide for them

can be fined, too.

Example: A worker was on a hoist tower at a construction project in Ontario when he jumped from the tower to a nearby roof. An MOL inspector saw his jump. The inspector also saw that although the worker was wearing a fall protection harness and lanyard, the lanyard wasn't tied off to anything. And the hoist tower he jumped from was approximately 15.24 metres (50 feet) above the ground. The worker pleaded guilty to failing to be adequately protected by a method of fall protection while exposed to a fall of more than three metres and was fined \$1,500 [*Christopher Schwaemmie*, Govt. News Release, March 12, 2014].

Fall protection equipment, such as full body harnesses, should be inspected before use by a [competent person](#) for worn or damaged straps, buckles, D-rings or lines. (Use this [fall protection equipment inspection checklist](#).)

Workers should follow the manufacturer's instructions when putting on personal fall protection equipment and ensure that all straps are fastened and adjusted correctly. For example, a full body harness should fit snugly. Workers shouldn't start work until they're comfortable with the equipment's condition and fit.

Workers should then attach a lanyard to the D-ring on their harness and anchor it securely to an appropriate anchor point.

Bottom line: Workers aren't safe from falls unless they properly tie off their personal fall protection equipment.