

Produced by the Access Industry Forum (AIF) and WAHSA, and supported by the Home Builders Federation.
IMPORTANT NOTE: Toolbox Talks are not intended to replace formal training but to supplement it.

MISUSE OF PERSONAL FALL PROTECTION EQUIPMENT (PFPE)

What is the issue?

Personal Fall Protection Equipment (PFPE) is often required in the erection and dismantling of scaffolding and other areas of work at height in the housebuilding sector.

It's incorrect use can result in death or life changing injuries.

The correct selection, proper use and management is therefore critical to maintain a safe system of work.

Types of misuse

1. Incorrect selection of anchor points

i.e. selecting anchor points that don't provide sufficient clearance distance below the user or are of insufficient strength.

The anchor point needs to be as high above the user's position as possible or as far away from the fall hazard. Fall Arrest anchor points need a minimum strength of 12kN (approximately 1.2 tonnes). A suitably trained operator will be able to select appropriate anchor points.

2. Securing the unused leg of a lanyard to the harness

A twin leg or double lanyard are commonly used. If the unused leg of the twin leg lanyard is clipped back to a point on the harness it can prevent the energy absorber from working correctly, subjecting the faller to loads which can cause death or life changing injuries.

The unused leg of a twin leg or double lanyard should only be attached to designated 'parking points' on the harness. These are designed to detach from the harness in the event of a fall, allowing the shock absorber to perform its function. Suitable harness user training will enable the user to identify appropriate parking points on a harness.

3. Incorrectly fitting a full body harness

- A loose fitting harness, or one incorrectly fitted can cause injuries;
- A harness should be suitably sized and adjusted for the user. It should be re-adjusted if clothing is removed or added during the working day;
- If a user does not understand how to correctly fit and adjust their harness, training will be required.

4. Lack of rescue planning

An individual who is suspended in a full body harness needs urgent rescue. A planned and workable provision for rescue of a worker who is suspended in their harness must be in place when operatives are using PFPE. Rescue teams must be trained.

What should you do if you see misuse?

- Report misuse to a supervisor/site manager;
- Stop the work until the issue has been rectified;
- Discuss further training requirements with your supervisor/manager.

See next page for examples of good and bad practice >>

For further information, visit wahsa.org.uk



5 KEY POINTS

1. Incorrect use of PFPE can cause death or life changing injury
2. Ensure anchor points are of sufficient clearance and strength
3. Identify suitable parking points on a harness
4. Ensure you have a rescue plan in place
5. Report any misuse to your supervisor or manager - and STOP WORK until the issue has been resolved!

Useful references:

- WAHSA Practical Guidance Notes PGN01 & PGN03
- WAHSA Technical Guidance Notes TGN02 & TGN04



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Examples of good and bad practice...

Selection of anchor points:



GOOD PRACTICE:

Anchor point above operative



BAD PRACTICE:

Anchor point below operative



Securing the unused leg of a lanyard:



GOOD PRACTICE:

Lanyard leg clipped back to parking point



BAD PRACTICE:

Lanyard leg clipped back to harness



Fitting a full body harness:

GOOD PRACTICE: Harness suitably sized and correctly adjusted



BAD PRACTICE: Loose or incorrectly fitting harness

