

Rescue at Height

About 9 minutes to deliver

The harness stops the fall. It does not get anybody down — and the standard requires you to have already worked out who does.

Fall protection is written as though the fall is the end of the story. It is not. Somebody arrested in a harness is hanging in the air, conscious, and the clock has already started.

THE RULE PEOPLE HAVE NOT READ

1926.502(d)(20): the employer shall provide for prompt rescue of employees in the event of a fall, or shall assure that employees are able to rescue themselves.

That is a requirement, not a suggestion, and it has to be answered before anybody ties off — not while somebody is hanging.

WHY THE CLOCK IS SHORT

A harness holds a motionless person by the thighs. The leg straps press on the veins that return blood from the legs, blood pools below them, and the amount circulating to the heart and brain drops. It is called suspension trauma, and the important part is that it can happen to a fit person who is fully conscious and calling down to you.

- Symptoms come on fast: light-headedness, nausea, sweating, greying vision, then unconsciousness.
- Somebody unconscious in a harness is a medical emergency, and going limp makes the pooling worse.
- Anyone who has been suspended goes to hospital even if they seem fine on the ground. There are complications that show up after rescue, and paramedics need to know how long they hung.

"CALL 911" IS NOT A RESCUE PLAN

It is one line of one, and by itself it is usually too slow.

- How long until a fire crew is on scene here, with an aerial that reaches? Ask before you need the number.
- Who lowers them, with what, from where? A lift already on site is often the fastest answer — but only if somebody is trained on it and it is not blocked in.
- Nobody climbs to a suspended worker without their own protection. That is how one casualty becomes two.

WHAT MAKES A REAL PLAN

- A named method and named people, decided in the pre-task plan and said out loud.
- Equipment on site, not in a yard. A rescue kit locked in a container is not on site.
- A way to reach them. A lift positioned, a controlled descent device, or a pre-rigged lowering system.
- Trained people. Rescue equipment nobody has practised with is a bag somebody opens for the first time in an emergency.

WHAT THE HANGING WORKER CAN DO

- Keep the legs moving. Push against a surface, use the ladder rungs of the structure, pedal. Movement keeps the blood coming back.
- Suspension trauma straps — a small loop that deploys from the harness to stand in — cost very little and buy real time. Fit them and know how to reach them.
- Get weight off the thigh straps any way you can.

ASK THE CREW

- If somebody goes over the edge right now, who gets them down and with what?
- How long would it take a fire crew to reach this spot with a lift?
- Do our harnesses have trauma straps, and does anyone know how to deploy them?

29 CFR 1926.502 · 29 CFR 1926.503

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ATTENDANCE RECORD

Rescue at Height

About 9 minutes to deliver · 29 CFR 1926.502 · 29 CFR 1926.503

Date

Job / site

Delivered by

Company

#	Print name	Signature	Date
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I delivered this talk and determined it was suitable for this crew and this work.

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