Inspecting Fall Arrest Equipment

Made from webbing or rope

The following information may prove useful for anyone supplying fall arrest equipment incorporating energy absorbing lanyards made from webbing.

It gives generic advice on inspection regimes for this equipment where it is used to provide protection against falls from a height. However, many of the principles can also be applied to non-energy absorbing lanyards and safety harnesses used for the same purpose. They can also be applied to similar equipment such as anchor points.

Employers should consult the manufacturer and/or supplier of the equipment for any product-specific inspection requirements.

Introduction

An energy-absorbing lanyard is a line for connecting a full body harness to an anchorage point with an inbuilt device that reduces the impact of a fall.

There is a wide range of possible causes of degradation of synthetic fibres used in webbing and rope lanyards (including abuse, general wear and tear, edge/surface damage, ultraviolet light, dirt, grit, chemicals).

Research involving synthetic fibre webbing lanyards has confirmed a number of the potential causes of degradation. It also highlighted that there is no well-defined boundary (e.g. usable life) seperating those lanyards that are safe and those that are not (e.g. a 1mm cut in the edge of a lanyard can result in a 5 to 40% loss of strength depending on the make of lanyard being used). It is therefore essential that if lanyards are to be maintained to provide the required level of protection they are subject to an effective inspection regime