



Safety Message of the Day for IMEA Members

Orthostatic Intolerance Safety Message

When working at heights, the primary hazard that is addressed is the possibility of falling. Where fall prevention such as guardrails is not feasible then fall protection must be used. Fall protection such as a lanyard and full-body harness will protect a worker from a fall, but there is an additional hazard that must be planned for. After a fall, when a worker is suspended by their fall protection equipment there needs to be a prompt retrieval of the worker. If suspended too long, the worker will suffer from orthostatic intolerance also known as **suspension trauma**.

Importance of a Rescue Plan

In many working at heights situations if a person falls there may not be a straightforward way to get them down safely. This is why it is important to have a rescue plan in place before any work at heights begins. The plan should outline things such as spotters, rescue personnel, outside agencies (if needed), rescue equipment, rescue obstructions, etc. All of these things should be thought of and ready for use in case of an emergency.

If the appropriate rescue equipment or the number for an outside agency is not readily available in the case of an emergency, the time wasted could be the difference between life and death for a worker who is suspended after a fall.

Suspension trauma is an example of where a bad situation could turn worse quickly. Look at all hazards for a work task, not just the obvious ones. Have a rescue plan in place and hold rescue drills if possible. No one plans to ever fall from heights but there needs to be a plan in place in case it does happen.

