

LANYARD INSPECTION ALERT

It is evident that there is an increasing use of safety harness and energy-absorbing lanyards in the construction industry. An energy-absorbing lanyard is a line for connecting a full body harness to an anchorage point with an in-built device that reduces the impact of a fall. This guidance aims to alert users to the importance of regular inspection checks.

Various regulations require employers to have in place formal procedures to detect damage and defects at an early stage.

The Health and Safety at Work Inspectorate recommend that pre-use checks and detailed inspections are carried out at least every six months, or every three months if equipment is used frequently or in an arduous environment, every three months.

Employers etc should establish a regime for the inspection of lanyards which should include:

- The lanyards to be inspected
- The frequency and type of inspections (pre-use checks, detailed inspections, and where appropriate, interim inspections)
- Who will carry out the inspections
- What action is to be taken on finding defective lanyards
- The training of users and of competent persons to carry out the inspections

Employers should also consult manufacturer's instructions.

Pre Use Checks

These should be carried out each time the lanyard is used. The person doing the checks must be competent to do them.

Pre-use checks should be tactile and visual. The whole lanyard should be checked by passing it slowly through the hands to detect defects such as softening or hardening of fibres, ingress of contaminant. Visual checks should be undertaken in good light and will normally take a few minutes.

Detailed Inspections

More formal in-depth inspections should be carried out periodically at minimum intervals specified by the employers inspection regime. The inspection procedure should be drawn up by a competent person, and the inspections should be recorded.

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK INSPECTORATE
INFORMATION DOCUMENT: LANYARD INSPECTIONS

Examples of defects and damage

- A knot in the lanyard, other than those intended by the manufacturer
- Surface abrasion across the face of the webbing and at the webbing loops, particularly if localised
- Abrasion at the edges, particularly if localised
- Cuts to the webbing, rope or stitching, particularly at the edges (eg where the lanyard may have been choke-hitched around steelwork)
- Chemical attack which can result in local weakening and softening – often indicated by flaking of the surface. There may be a change to the colour of the fibres
- Heat or friction damage indicated by fibres with a glazed appearance which may feel harder than the surrounding fibres
- Damaged or deformed fittings (eg karabiners, screwlink connectors, scaffolding hooks)
- UV degradation which is difficult to detect, particularly visually, but there may be some loss of colour, if dyed, and a powdery surface
- Partially deployed energy absorber (eg short pull-out of tear webbing)
- Contamination (eg with dirt, grit, sand etc) which may result in internal or external abrasion.

Other Factors

- Any lanyard that has been used to arrest a fall should never be re-used. It should be withdrawn from service immediately and destroyed
- All lanyards should be indelibly and permanently marked. They should be uniquely identifiable so that they can be easily associated with their respective inspection document.