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SAFETY AND HEALTH TOPIC SHEET NO. 15: TOOL LANYARDS

A safety and health 'topic sheet' aimed at raising awareness of hazards in the rope access industry. The series may be of use as a toolbox talk.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 A tool lanyard is designed specifically to be a point of attachment between small tools, equipment and a technician. There are numerous types of lanyards, made from various materials, constructed solely for the purpose of attaching small tools and equipment in order to prevent dropped objects.

1.2 Currently, there is no specific product standard for tool lanyards.

1.3 The basic requirement is to take suitable and sufficient steps to prevent the fall of any material or object[1]. If this is not possible, the requirement is then to take suitable and sufficient steps to prevent any person being struck by any falling material or object which is liable to cause personal injury[2].

2 WHAT CAN GO WRONG …

2.1 Tools and equipment that are not correctly secured for work at height can be dropped or displaced, causing serious injury.

Case Study
A pneumatic grinder was disconnected from the pneumatic hose and hung from its lanyard. An attempt was made to reconnect the grinder to the hose. During this process the lanyard knot failed, resulting in the grinder falling from height into the ocean.

Case Study
While performing window cleaning via industrial rope access the squeegee wiper fell down on the ground, inside the barricaded exclusion zone.

[1] In the UK Work at Height Regulations 2005, Regulation 10(1), Falling objects: "… Every employer shall, where necessary to prevent injury to any person, take suitable and sufficient steps to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, the fall of any material or object …".

[2] Regulation 10(2): "Where it is not reasonably practicable to comply with the requirements of paragraph (1), every employer shall take suitable and sufficient steps to prevent any person being struck by any falling material or object which is liable to cause personal injury.

3 WHY THINGS CAN GO WRONG …

3.1 Things can go wrong for a number of reasons. For example, tools and equipment may be:

- worn, damaged or have been subject to a shock loading;
- unattached, i.e. not be secured in any way;
- incorrectly secured (i.e. the lanyard or connectors are not suitable for the load; or the lanyard is tied and has the potential to come undone);
- too heavy for the lanyard (i.e. the rated capacity is exceeded);
- difficult to secure, or attached to the lanyard by a non-load bearing part;
- connected without considering all elements, e.g. batteries and sockets, etc.

3.2 Tool or equipment can become snagged, overloading the lanyard.

3.3 The tool lanyard may be unsuitable for the tool and/or task, e.g. interfere with its operation if snagged in a drill. Perhaps it needs to be elasticated.

3.4 The rope access industry has used accessory cord to secure tools and equipment. However, in selecting this option you must be sure that it is 'suitable and sufficient' and, in particular, that the knot can't come undone (or weaken the lanyard to the extent that it could then fail under an impact load).

4 WHAT YOU CAN DO …

4.1 You should select and use the correct type of lanyard for the tools and equipment being used; and the task being undertaken.

4.2 Due consideration should be given to the selection and use of lanyards for protection against dropped objects.

4.3 Think about the tools, equipment and tasks that you undertake. For example, a drill attached to a technician via the correct lanyard will still need its battery changing occasionally; also, the drill bit.

5 HOW YOU CAN DO IT …

5.1 You should:

- assess the type of lanyard required, to suit the tools and equipment being used;
- use tool lanyards suitable for the task, e.g. load capacity, length, flexibility, etc.;
- plan the work, remember that even the correct lanyard may make a task slower.

6 ACTION

6.1 Review your management system's procedures for identifying, procuring and using tool lanyards.

7 REFERENCES

7.1 Further information can be found in:

(a) IRATA International code of practice for industrial rope access (Third edition, September 2016)[3]:

- Part 3, Annex M, Use of tools and other work equipment, M.1.3, General

> "… Where tools and equipment are carried by the rope access technician, appropriate steps should be taken to prevent them being dropped or falling on to people below …"

- Part 3, Annex M, Use of tools and other work equipment, M.2.1, Small tools and equipment

7.2 For a list of current (and past) 'safety communications' by IRATA, see www.irata.org

8 RECORD FORM

8.1 An example *Safety and Health Topic Sheet: Record Form* is given below. Members may have their own procedure(s) for recording briefings to technicians and others.

9 FURTHER READING

Working at height. A brief guide (HSE, INDG401)[4]

Recommended Guidelines for the Safe Use of Tools & Equipment at Height (DROPS)[5]

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3 www.irata.org/default.php?cmd=215&doc_id=4336

4 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg401.pdf

5 http://dropsonline.org/assets/documents/Recommended-Guidelines-for-Safe-Use-of-Tools-at-Height-April-2011.pdf

IRATA SAFETY AND HEALTH TOPIC SHEET – RECORD FORM			
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Date:			
Topic(s) for discussion:		Topic Sheet No. 15: Tool lanyards	
Reason for talk:			
Start time:		**Finish time:**	
Attended by *Please sign to verify understanding of briefing*			
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Matters raised by employees:		**Action taken as a result:**	
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