



Safety Alert No. 492

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BSEE Alerts Offshore Workers to Series of Incidents Involving Self-Retracting Lanyards for Fall Protection

The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) has observed a trend of safety incidents related to the improper use of fall protection during rope access work. Of the many hazardous tasks conducted offshore, those involving the potential to fall from heights can be among the deadliest. Due to the frequency of safety incidents occurring during rope access operations (Figure 1), BSEE is informing workers of potential dangers and providing recommendations to help prevent future injuries.



Figure 1: Example of rope access work.

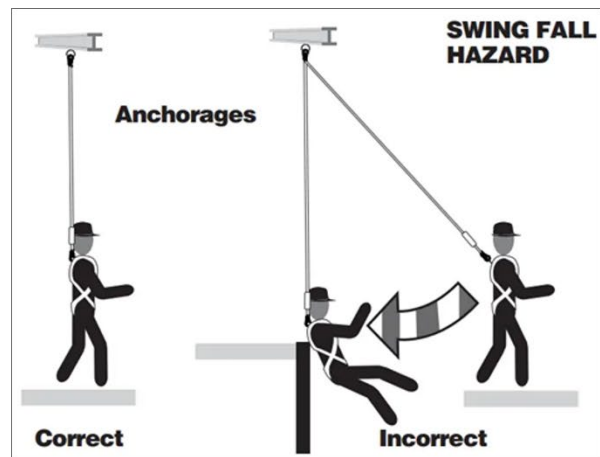


Figure 2: Swing fall hazard.

Recent incidents include the following:

- During an inspection of an overboard water caisson, a worker fell approximately 90 feet when the main line of the self-retracting lanyard (SRL) slipped, failing to stop the fall. The worker's leg struck a pipe clamp support during the fall, which resulted in a laceration to the shin. The investigation determined that the self-braking belay used at the anchor point for the primary line was incorrectly rigged.
- A worker fell while preparing a transporter for blowout preventer operations. A combination of circumstances contributed to the worker's injuries. Among the factors cited were slippery surfaces, exhaustion, and increased distance to an

anchor point, which caused the worker to swing from an unsafe angle rather than drop vertically (Figure 2). When the worker lost footing and grip, the resulting swing caused a much more severe outcome since the worker was positioned far from the center point where the SRL was anchored.

BSEE recommends that operators and their contractors, where appropriate, consider the following:

- Know the lanyard or SRL system's limitations and always work at angles less than recommended. It is considered extremely dangerous to use a lanyard or SRL at more than 15 degrees from vertical; however, some systems will allow up to 22.5 degrees from vertical. Check the manufacturer's recommended safe practices.
- Ensure workers requiring fall protection make it a priority to check the condition and know the correct usage of their fall arrest systems. Additionally, it is crucial for workers to be physically and mentally prepared to engage in these procedures.
- Perform a thorough inspection of all components of an SRL before each use, checking the condition and verifying there are no cracks, rips, or malfunctioning parts.
- Make sure to use and implement appropriate fall protection.
- Create and adhere to a strict job safety analysis and follow the requirements for self-retracting lifelines.
- Certify that training has been completed and is current for any employee who might be exposed to fall hazards.
- Perform multiple checks to ensure SRL's are functioning and properly rigged.
- Have a site-specific rescue plan in place.
- Be aware of the working conditions and environment. Exercise caution in wet or slippery conditions, use additional personal protective equipment and other safety systems when necessary, and always ensure the structural integrity of anchor points.

– BSEE –

A **Safety Alert** is a tool used by BSEE to inform the offshore oil and gas industry of the circumstances surrounding a potential safety issue. It also contains recommendations that could assist avoiding potential incidents on the Outer Continental Shelf.

Category: Fall Protection Equipment, Personnel Safety