

Bullied at work? You are not alone

A new university study of 17,524 adults found that workplace harassment is directly tied to physical and psychological problems experienced by victims, such as stress, loss of sleep, depression, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

The research found that over a 12-month period:

- About 8 percent of respondents said they were threatened, harassed, or bullied at work.
- Those reporting higher rates of harassment include hourly workers, those working for state and local governments, multiple jobholders, nightshift workers, and those working nonregular schedules.
- Female victims reported higher rates of psychosocial distress, smoking, and pain disorders like migraines.

If you are subject to workplace harassment, you should alert your supervisor to any concerns about your safety or security, and report all incidents immediately in writing. Discuss with your employer what stress debriefing sessions and posttraumatic counseling services are available to you. Attend personal safety training programs to learn how to recognize, avoid, or diffuse potentially violent situations.



The personal fall arrest system worked, but tragically Steve was directly above the World Piñata Championships.

EMPLOYEE SAFETY NEWSLETTER

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How to use a PFAS correctly *Following the do's and don'ts*

Personal fall arrest systems (PFASs) provide protection from falling or safely arrests a fall if one occurs. Falls from heights and on the same level are among the leading causes of serious work-related injuries and deaths. The entire PFAS must be capable of withstanding the tremendous impact forces involved in a fall. A person without protection will free-fall 4 feet (ft) in half a second and 16 ft in 1 second! A PFAS includes a full-body harness, a shock-absorbing lanyard or rope grab, a vertical lift line, and an anchorage able to support a load of up to 5,000 pounds. The PFAS must be rigged so that you cannot free-fall more than 4 ft or hit a lower level. Do not use body belts as part of your PFAS. Body belts have proven to cause even more hazards. For example, you could suffer internal injuries or even death from pressure on the internal organs while suspended, or you could suffocate by a belt that shifted upward from the waist to the armpits.

Don't:

- Don't tie a knot in the lanyard. This will reduce its strength.
- Don't use water pipes, electrical conduits, light fixtures, or guardrails as anchor points.
- Don't use any lanyards without self-locking snap hooks.
- Don't join multiple lanyards together to reach an anchorage.
- Don't tie off to the same anchorage as another worker unless it is designed and approved by an engineer.
- Don't unhook from your fall protection while exposed to a fall of 4 ft or more.
- Don't allow someone else to rig your equipment unless you verify that it has been done correctly.
- Don't use an anchorage that is not independent of any anchorage used to support or suspend platforms.

Do:

- Pick an anchorage point that will support 5,000 pounds.
- Rig the fall arrest systems so you can't free-fall more than 4 ft (or contact any lower level).
- Tie off above your head. A 6-ft person who ties off at the feet could free-fall as much as 12 ft.
- Place your anchorage directly above/behind your work area to avoid potential swing fall hazards.
- Use the shortest lanyard possible. The shorter the tie-off, the shorter the fall.
- Inspect your equipment daily before each use for wear damage, deterioration, fraying ropes, cracks, or other defects in the hardware.
- Tag and remove any defective equipment from service.
- Make sure you are attached to a sound anchorage.

National Ladder Safety Month

March is National Ladder Safety Month. According to NIOSH, ladder incidents cause more than 15,000 nonfatal injuries involving days away from work and about 34,000 nonfatal injuries treated in emergency departments. Here are tips from OSHA to keep you safe while using a ladder:

- Maintain ladders free of oil, grease, and other slip hazards.
- Do not load ladders beyond their maximum intended load or beyond the manufacturer's rated capacity.
- Do not use ladders on slippery surfaces unless they are secured or have slip-resistant feet.
- Take steps to secure ladders in areas where they can be displaced by work activities.
- Keep areas clear around the top and bottom of ladders.
- Do not move, shift, or extend ladders while in use.
- Use ladders equipped with nonconductive side rails if the worker or the ladder could contact exposed, energized electrical equipment.
- Face the ladder when moving up or down.
- Use at least one hand to grasp the ladder when climbing.
- Do not carry objects or loads that could cause loss of balance and falling.



How to use a PFAS correctly: Quiz

1. A personal fall arrest system (PFAS) consists of only a full-body harness. **True or False**
2. Body belts are a good, safe way to stop yourself from falling. **True or False**
3. How long does it take for a person without protection to free-fall 16 feet (ft)?
 - A. 1 minute
 - B. 30 seconds
 - C. 1 second
4. You can unhook from your fall protection while exposed to a fall of 4 ft. **True or False**
5. You do not need to inspect your equipment daily before each use. Check once every week instead. **True or False**

Answers

1. False. A PFAS includes a full-body harness, a shock-absorbing lanyard or rope grab, a vertical lift line, and an anchorage. **2. False.** Body belts can cause even more hazards. Internal injuries are associated with body belts, and if the belt shifts from the waist to the armpits, you can suffocate. **3. C. 1 second.** It takes only 1 second to free-fall 16 ft and only a half of a second to free-fall 4 ft. **4. False.** It is not safe to free-fall 4 ft or more. Your PFAS must be rigged so that you cannot free-fall more than 4 ft or hit a lower level. **5. False.** You must inspect your PFAS equipment daily before each use. Look for wear damage, deterioration, fraying ropes, cracks, or other defects in the hardware.

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Aerial lifts: Know the safe work practices

Aerial lifts are any vehicle-mounted device with a bucket to lift personnel. Do you know how to safely operate an aerial lift? The following are some safe work practices to use when operating an aerial lift.

- Maintain and operate aerial lifts according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Make sure the lift is positioned on a level and solid surface.
- Position outriggers or stabilizers correctly, and place wheel chocks under tires.
- Wear a personal fall arrest system (PFAS) attached correctly to the lift. Note that belting off to an adjacent pole, structure, or equipment is not permitted.
- Don't overload the lift—the load capacity should be on an attached plaque.
- Make sure ropes, electric cords, and hoses don't get tangled with the lift when the platform is elevated, lowered, or moved.
- Stand firmly on the floor of the lift, keeping the soles of your shoes flat on the platform.
- Never use a plank to bridge a gap between the lift and a structure or work surface.
- Don't sit or climb on lift guardrails, and never use a ladder on a lift to gain more height.
- Before lowering the lift, make sure the area under the platform is clear.
- Before moving an aerial lift for travel, inspect the boom to see that it is properly cradled and outriggers are in stowed position (except for equipment that is specifically designed and certified to operate with a person in the platform).