



8 Question Guide to Choosing the Right Fall Protection Equipment

To help keep your employees safe in your workplace, we have created a list of questions with examples and the answers to each. These questions and answers will help you consider which fall prevention equipment is best to use in your specific situation. These questions can be taken with you to the jobsite and asked prior to performing a job at heights.

Instructions:

Step 1: Use our [Job Safety Analysis form](#) to identify the fall hazards in your workplace.

Step 2: Use our [Fall Prevention Hierarchy of Controls Flowchart](#) to help walk you through the control process.

Step 3: Ask yourself the following questions when identifying which fall prevention equipment will help you perform your job effectively and safely.

Question 1: How long will your employees be exposed to the fall hazard and how often will they need to be exposed to it?

Examples	Answers
<p>Example 1: Your employee is servicing HVAC equipment on a roof of a building. It will take them one hour to service.</p> <p>Example 2: Your employees need regular access to the roof area of a building because your filters need to be changed monthly or weekly or the employees need to be up there for a longer period of time to service equipment.</p>	<p>Answer 1: If your employee only services the equipment once a year, installing guardrail would be a costly and time-consuming control for such a small return. Instead, personal fall prevention equipment, attached to a permanent anchor, might be a more reasonable solution and a better return on investment.</p> <p>Answer 2: A guardrail would be a better option in this scenario than using personal fall protection because it wouldn't require extra work to put on and adjust the fall prevention equipment every time your employees need to access the roof.</p>

Question 2: Does the fall prevention equipment need to be easy to install and remove?

Examples	Answers
<p>Example 1: Your employees are going to be installing new solar panels on a residential building.</p> <p>Example 2: You have several types of contractors that will be working on the side of the multi-structure building you are erecting.</p>	<p>Answer 1: In this situation, you want to do everything possible to avoid compromising the existing roof any more than you have to. Building much of the solar equipment on the ground, lifting it up to the roof, lowering it in place, and then using personal fall prevention equipment while attaching it to the structure is likely a better solution than something like a guardrail or netting.</p> <p>Answer 2: In this situation, erecting scaffolding around the perimeter of the structure would most likely be the best solution. Although it might take significant amount of time to erect, the scaffolding can be used by multiple trades over a long period of time while its integrity is constantly being monitored and ensured by one erecting contractor.</p>

Question 3: Will what you are anchoring the fall prevention equipment to support the intended load or become compromised once the equipment is engaged?

Example	Answer
<p>You are planning to anchor a personal fall arrest system to newly installed trusses during framing.</p>	<p>If the trusses in this situation have not been determined by a qualified person to withstand a load of 5000lbs, you will need to use a different type of fall prevention equipment, such as a fall restraint system, which allows for four times the intended load.</p>

Question 4: Do you need to protect many people or just a few?

Example	Answer
<p>You have several roofing employees that will be installing thermoplastic polyolefin (TPO) roofing material on a large unguarded commercial roof.</p>	<p>Using personal fall prevention equipment with large groups of people can be difficult and cumbersome as the lanyards can often get in the way of each other. So using something higher on the hierarchy of controls, such as guardrail or nets would be a better solution for this situation.</p>

Question 5: Will the environment where you are using the fall prevention equipment allow the equipment to function properly?

Examples	Answers
<p>Example 1: You are planning on having some employees use 3-foot tall step stools to paint the eaves of a building right at the edge a 48-foot tall shipping dock.</p> <p>Example 2: You are planning on having two employees repair some damaged stucco on an exterior wall 6-foot from the top of a 2 story commercial building. The ground surrounding the building is flat for approximately 10-foot, but then slopes greatly downward for an additional 100 feet.</p>	<p>Answer 1: Using personal fall arrest system in this scenario would not be the best choice as the total fall distance would not be enough for the system to engage before the employee hits the lower surface. A better choice might be to use an aerial lift from the ground level of your shipping dock.</p> <p>Answer 2: Using an aerial lift in this confined area with a slope close by is not the best option as the ground could give way underneath the lift or the driver could accidentally drive off the slope. Instead, building a small scaffold or performing the work from ladders might be a safer option.</p>

Question 6: Are there factors in the area that would make using that type of fall prevention equipment a bad choice?

Examples	Answers
<p>Example 1: You are planning on having your employees use personal fall protection, specifically rope grab harnesses, while reroofing an existing one-story house. There is a picket fence running half the length of the house around the front yard and around the other front half of the house.</p> <p>Example 2: You are planning on having your employees trim some trees next to a commercial building. The trees are located next to some power lines.</p>	<p>Answer 1: Rope grab harnesses might not be the best choice of fall prevention equipment in this situation as the employees must be vigilant about adjusting their lines to ensure that they are using the system as fall restraint because if they do not and fall from the structure, they could land on the picket fence and be impaled.</p> <p>Answer 2: Using an aerial lift to trim trees around utility lines would be very dangerous as the lift could come in to contact with the lines and electrocute those inside the basket of the lift. Instead, an insulated aerial device, such as an insulated bucket truck, would be a better solution.</p>

Question 7: Is it what they would choose to use if they were involved in the decision making process?

Example	Answer
<p>You are planning on having your employees install cement roofing tile on a new construction residential building.</p>	<p>Wearing self-retracting landlines (SRLs) in this scenario might not be the best choice for your employees as part of the SRL's functionality is a continuous pull against the wearer, which could cause fatigue over time. Using a different type of fall protection may not only increase their comfort, it will increase the likelihood that they will use it when you are not there to monitor them.</p>

Question 8: Will what you are planning on using interfere with the look of the building?

Example	Answer
You are constructing a new building for your business and are very concerned with your company's image.	Using a permanent guardrail on your new building may not be the best option as it may interfere with the image you are trying to portray to your customers unless the guardrail is designed into the look of the building. On the other hand, your customers would probably never notice having a 48-inch tall parapet wall, which would also serve to protect your employees when they are working on your roof.

These are just a few of the questions you may want to consider when you are preparing to put your fall prevention controls in place. Remember, every type of fall prevention equipment is designed by the manufacturer to be used in a specific way, but real life is never quite that black and white. It is your job, and that of your employees, to decide which type fits your needs best.

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