

# Some key considerations when choosing fall protection PPE



An MSA White Paper



**WE KNOW WHAT'S AT STAKE.**

Falls from height remain one of the biggest causes of occupational fatalities and major injuries. In France, they are the second leading cause of death at work behind road hazards, and the third leading cause of permanent disability and work stoppages. Every year, the country experiences 126,000 accidents at work related to a fall, each incident leaving injured workers unable to work for 73 days on average.

Unfortunately, some continue to underestimate the risks associated with falls and/or fail to adhere to proper safety protocols, such as having appropriate fall protection systems in place and wearing suitable personal protective wear (PPE).



### Why isn't appropriate PPE always selected?

Understanding the risks associated with working at height and ensuring effective fall protection procedures, systems, and equipment are in place is as important as ever. Even for qualified individuals, working on top of buildings, scaffolding or on the edge of pits, or precipices can be risky business.

Despite this, health and safety professionals can face a range of barriers when trying to select the appropriate PPE for the task in hand, including:

#### Product Selection

Some customers find that product selection is a complicated matter. Whereas some professionals can be overwhelmed with the sheer number of different solutions they have to choose from, and some might not understand the differences between product options, knowledgeable consultants can help to bridge gaps in understanding.

#### Price Points

Within a competitive market, budgets and product pricing are huge considerations for many buyers in the purchasing of PPE and with some buyers, it is the key indicator of their purchasing decision.

For example, some are seeking cost-effective solutions to keep overall project costs down. Each customer will strike its own balance between price, quality, and other factors such as availability.



### Compliance

Compliance should be a key consideration when selecting safety products, and in France the standards set a base for safety, but with innovations often moving faster than regulatory updates, companies could benefit from assessing whether additional safety features would be beneficial for their requirements. This whitepaper discusses some of the barriers to ensuring the appropriate fall protection PPE is selected for projects.

### Looking beyond compliance

Organisations selecting appropriate fall protection PPE typically need to invest time in assessing and quantifying risks in line with European Directive 89 656 CEE, as well as any relevant local legislation. This isn't always a straightforward task because every environment and industry are different, and some companies may find they have complex access requirements spanning multiple locations to consider.

Relying solely on legislation can also have limitations. For example, the EU capacity standard for a body harness – an essential piece of PPE in certain circumstances – is currently 100kg. That 100kg is to include the person in the harness, plus any other PPE and the equipment they may need to carry out their tasks. This weight isn't always sufficient for workers and their gear.

Along with this, legal standards may also not be updated as frequently as manufacturers are making developments and breakthroughs with new technologies, materials, and designs in fall protection PPE.

Thus, it may be worthwhile to consider products that have been recently tested – in addition to enhanced safety features, some of these advances could bring practical and productivity advantages.

For this reason, even companies with existing PPE can benefit from considering whether to take a proactive approach to evaluating and purchasing PPE even when not required by changes to the law.

Ensuring fall protection PPE is compliant may also not meet the full range of a company's selection criteria. Health and safety professionals could want to determine whether a specific PPE option meets the needs of their workforce. Some key questions that an organisation could ask itself depending on their circumstances are: Does the option hinder workers and their productivity? Are they happy to wear it or do they try to avoid using it wherever possible?

## A few key points to bear in mind when choosing fall protection PPE

### Accounting for the total cost of ownership

Many organisations also benefit from considering the true, whole-life cost of ownership when selecting, comparing, and budgeting for solutions. Initial purchase price is sometimes used to distinguish between seemingly similar solutions, especially when trying to limit expenditures.

But upfront costs may not capture all costs. Some organisations take a broader view of the product's lifetime costs when making these decisions. This aims to avoid any immediate savings made on the initial purchase price being depleted, or negated, after adding the cost of service, maintenance, repairs, and replacement.

There are several ongoing lifetime costs that could be considered. For instance, fall protection PPE requires regular inspections and sometimes needs service, maintenance and even replacement, according to the manufacturer schedule.

Additionally, there are varying costs associated with permanent and temporary fall protection lifelines.

Temporary lifelines sometimes can't be serviced or maintained onsite; thus, they need to be periodically returned to the manufacturer or an approved service agent which could add cost for the business. Whereas permanent lifelines are designed to be inspected onsite, this option can save time and potentially save the business money.

Build quality can also impact lifetime costs. Harness textiles, for example, can become prematurely degraded by abrasion, dirt, and contaminants. Those with effective materials or coatings for the organisation's selected environment will be better protected, significantly extending service life for daily use applications; while others may wear prematurely, potentially requiring early replacement, further increasing the total cost of ownership.

Those products that are both built to last and easy to manage can make the lives of the purchaser much easier in the long run. Whereas those that are not could result in greater costs and inconvenience throughout the course of their lifetime.



### Products fit for purpose and safety

Ultimately, fall protection PPE is there to protect workers. Therefore, it is often essential for the organisation, or individual, who selects such PPE to invest time and resources to understand risks and specify appropriate fall protection solutions for the job in hand.

Those equipment choices during procurement can benefit from considering key features such as the total cost of ownership, comparative quality, comfort, simplicity of use, as well as ongoing service and maintenance processes.

### How can MSA Safety help?

MSA Safety has a specific approach to developing PPE by ensuring our solutions are compliant, as well as creating premium products that offer an exceptional, whole life cost. A priority for us is to work with our customers, by helping them understand their specific fall protection needs. We offer a range of safety solutions that enable a customer to choose the appropriate equipment for them, their applications, and their circumstances.

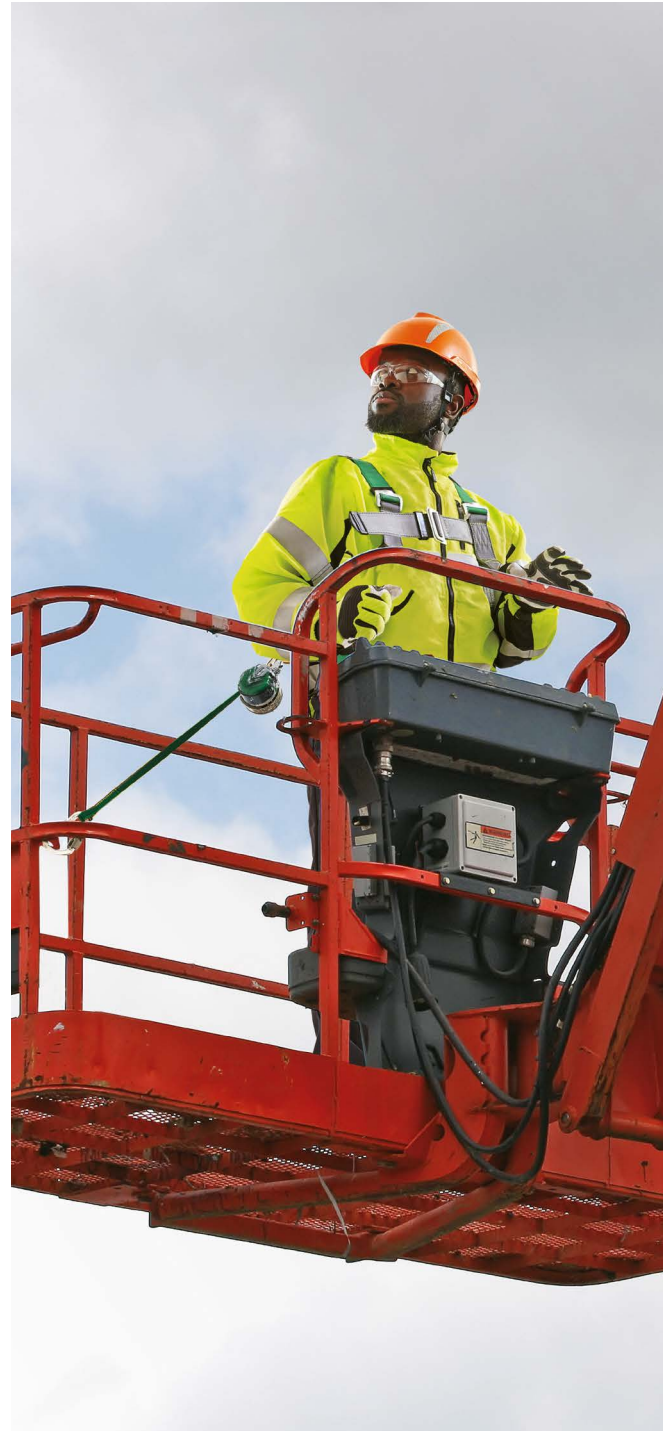
It's all very well having PPE on site - but is it truly effective if workers don't wear it and aren't trained on how to use it correctly? A study from the Center for Protection of Workers' Rights in the US revealed that almost half of the primary causes of falls arise because protective equipment is not used. And so, we work tirelessly using voice of customer research to develop innovative PPE that is comfortable, easy to use, and accessible. From safety harnesses and lifelines, right through to head protection and accessories, we are committed to our safety solutions.

#### References:

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ameli.fr/entreprise/sante-travail/risques/chutes/risque-sous-estime>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ameli.fr/entreprise/sante-travail/risques/chutes/risque-sous-estime>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.cpwr.com/wp-content/uploads/RR-falls\\_experience\\_survey.pdf](https://www.cpwr.com/wp-content/uploads/RR-falls_experience_survey.pdf)



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