

# Guidance

## Tool Lanyard Safety

One of the best ways to prevent tools from being dropped whilst working at height is to use the appropriate tethering systems. A tool lanyard specifically designed for this job keeps a tool secure so that even if a worker drops it, it never reaches the ground. As an added bonus, such lanyards are generally inexpensive when compared to the cost of the tools themselves or the potential financial costs of having an accident. When it comes to preventing dropped tools, lanyards are one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to deal with the issue.

There are many different styles of lanyards to meet the tethering requirements of almost any tool. They can be very simple for small tools to more substantial tethering system for high value and heavier equipment. The type of lanyards an individual company will use depends on a variety of factors including the type of work being done, type of tools being used, the weather conditions, environment and so on.

## Developing a Lanyard Scheme

To the untrained individual, it seems that the best way to use lanyards is to simply get a box of lanyards and attach everything to a tool belt or safety harness. But for workers who have plenty of experience using lanyard systems, it is much more complicated than that. Imagine you had a dozen different hand tools you're using to install electrical junction boxes. If you had all of them tethered to your tool belt with 1 metre lanyards you would have a dozen different straps hanging off your tool belt. With all those straps it would be very easy for you to get caught on something which could cause you to snag, trip or fall thus causing a hazard in it self.

Designing a proper lanyard scheme requires a little bit of knowledge - and a lot of experience. A properly designed scheme using the previous example would utilise varying lengths and types of lanyards affixed to different points. For example, you may have one hand tool attached to a retractable tether on your left hip. You may have two or three other light tools connected to your safety harness with short lanyards. The rest of your tools maybe connected to your tool belt with longer lanyards.

If your scheme is properly designed, you'll have access to all your tools in a way that is comfortable yet still safe. You won't be tripping over excess lanyard material, you won't have to worry about your lanyards getting caught on building components, and you'll be able to move around your tool belt with a more natural effort.

## Customised Lanyards

The most basic lanyard consists of either a length of webbing or cable with connectors on either end. Tools with built-in anchors work best with these basic lanyards because workers can simply hook them and go. But sometimes you have tools without built-in anchors. Examples would include hammers, cordless drills, and ratchets. These types of tools require customised tethering solutions that utilise the tool's own shape and size to determine the best way to hold onto it.

Using a hammer as an example, one customised solution is a tether system that involves a special adhesive sleeve. With this system the tether is held in place by sliding a tight sleeve over it and the handle of the hammer. The sleeve is then allowed to shrink and adhere to the handle, making a permanent bond between the two. With the tether sandwiched firmly between them and a lanyard

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## Different Lanyards for Different Jobs

Experienced workers know that the same tool can require several different lanyard set-ups depending on the particular work environment and use. You may need to change the length of the lanyard between two different jobs, the placement of a specific tool on a specific job, and so on. This requires most companies who work at height to have a variety of lanyard solutions available. Thankfully, the cost is fairly low so it is usually affordable. On the other hand, attempting to use the “one-size-fits-all” lanyard solution is not a smart idea.

Part of a job safety inspection will include the appropriateness of specific lanyard for specific applications. An inspector will observe the tools a worker is using, and how they're being used, and then determine whether the lanyard choice is appropriate. If it's not, the inspector will usually recommend what would be appropriate for the environment. Employers who keep an ample supply of the different types of lanyards around are in the best position to respond to such inspections quickly.

## Worker Compliance

Although a properly planned and deployed lanyard system disrupts individual workers as little as possible, there's no way to get around the fact that there will be some worker inconvenience. Using a screwdriver with a lanyard attached simply isn't the same as using one that's free. Planners and inspectors must do everything in their power to limit the burden tool tethering places on workers, but there comes a point where each worker has to accept that lanyard systems are part of the work environment and he needs to make the best of them. When workers comply with safety regulations the workplace is much safer and much more peaceful.

## Your Safety Equipment Supplier

When you're searching for lanyards and other safety equipment it is paramount that you purchase from a reliable manufacturer with a proven track record. Safety is not something that should be experimented with, neither is the quality of your safety equipment. Make sure all of your lanyards are of the highest quality and rated for the type of work you're doing. They need to be strong enough to withstand the punishment of your work environment and the weight of the tools you will be attaching to them.

A good way to determine the quality of a lanyard supplier is to ask fellow contractors what products they use and how they like them. You'll probably never get a more honest report than you will from someone else in a similar industry. Furthermore, you can search online for manufacturer reviews and ratings. Finally, you can ask various suppliers for written safety ratings and any tests they may have performed on their products. Between all three sources you ought to be able to get a good idea of who the quality manufacturers are.

Author: N. S. Beardmore January 2012

## LEADING EDGE

Tool Safety Solutions Ltd  
Unit 5  
Glenmore Business Park  
Aerodrome Road  
Gosport  
Hampshire  
United Kingdom

Tel +44 (0) 1329 550 121  
Fax +44 (0) 1329 550 470  
Email [sales@leadingedgesafety.co.uk](mailto:sales@leadingedgesafety.co.uk)  
Web [toollanyardsbagsandbelts.com](http://toollanyardsbagsandbelts.com)