



TOTAL GROUP

SAFETY & EQUIPMENT GUIDE

Fall-Protection Equipment Compatibility Basics for Industrial Buyers

Practical equipment guidance for industrial teams.

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ONLINE GUIDE

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General information only. Confirm site-specific equipment decisions, applicable requirements, and manufacturer instructions before purchase or use.

Fall-protection equipment is compatible only when the **complete proposed system** is confirmed for its intended use, connections, anchor arrangement, clearance, and rescue method. Legitimate harnesses, lanyards, self-retracting lifelines (SRLs), connectors, and anchors may still not be approved to work together in a particular setup. Treat compatibility as a documented system question—not a brand, rating, or catalogue question.

This is a practical review guide, not a legal, engineering, or product-suitability determination. Follow the manufacturer instructions for every component, the site's approved fall-protection and rescue plan, and the standards and regulatory requirements that apply to the work and jurisdiction.

Key Takeaways

- Compatibility means the connected parts and the overall system are approved to perform as intended for the actual task—not merely that the parts can be physically attached.
- Start with the fall hazard, work method, anchor location, clearance, and rescue plan before selecting or replacing a component.
- Do not assume different brands or matching certification markings are interchangeable. Use the relevant manufacturers' written instructions and approvals.
- Inspect both the equipment and the proposed connection before use. Remove uncertainty from service until it is resolved through the approved process.

1 Compatibility is a system decision

A personal fall-protection system has to work as an assembled system. That includes the worker interface, connecting subsystem, anchorage connector, anchorage, and the conditions in which the system is used. In federally regulated Canadian workplaces, the **Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations** state that components of a personal fall-protection system must be compatible and used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions ([Justice Laws, section 12.09](#)). This federal requirement is a useful baseline, but it is not a substitute for reviewing provincial or territorial rules that may apply to a particular site.

Compatibility is broader than certification. A buyer may see a full-body harness, energy-absorbing lanyard, SRL, carabiner, and anchor connector that all carry relevant markings. That does not, by itself, confirm the selected connection point, the direction of loading, the attachment method, the permitted fall-arrest configuration, or the product instructions. The public CSA Group overview describes CSA Z259.17:21 as guidance for selecting and implementing active fall-protection solutions based on factors including the work, frequency of access, and worker knowledge and skills ([CSA Group](#)).

In a purchase review, a replacement lanyard becomes part of an existing harness-to-anchor arrangement. A connector's gate, shape, locking action, mating part, and expected load path all matter.

2 Start with the job and the plan, not the shopping cart

The correct first question is, "What method protects the worker for this task?" CCOHS describes a site-specific fall-protection plan as covering hazard identification, equipment selection and assembly, maintenance, inspection, use, removal, and rescue procedures ([CCOHS, Fall Protection Plan](#)). That is the working context for a compatibility review.

A purchasing request should identify:

- the task, work location, access method, and approved protection method;
- the named anchor and anchorage connector;
- existing equipment and its model information;
- clearance and swing-fall hazards; and
- the approved rescue method and equipment.

This sequence matters because the protection method changes the system question. CCOHS notes that fall arrest should be used only when other protection methods are not available or possible, and it directs users to consider free fall, impact with lower levels, and swing fall ([CCOHS, Fall Arrest Systems](#)). A buyer should not decide that a fall-arrest component is suitable merely because it looks stronger or offers more mobility than a restraint component.

Purchasing record tip: attach the current manufacturer instructions, product identifiers, and proposed configuration to the request.

3 Check the connection, not just the product name

The connector-to-connector or connector-to-anchor interface needs close review. A snap hook or carabiner must fully close and lock on its intended mating component without a condition that could permit unintentional disengagement. MSA's lanyard instructions, for example, say connecting hardware must be compatible in size, shape, and strength and warn that incompatible geometry can cause accidental disengagement, sometimes called rollout ([MSA, System Requirements](#)).

Do not apply one manufacturer's instruction as a universal rule. Obtain the instructions governing the actual products, ask for the approved connection method, and visually confirm closure and locking as required before the system is used.

Do not treat cross-brand combinations as automatically acceptable or prohibited. The written instructions, any express manufacturer approval, and the approved system review govern. As **U.S. framing only**, OSHA says components are not all interchangeable and that a substitution or change should be evaluated or tested by a competent person before use ([OSHA interpretation letter, 2012](#)). Canadian buyers should then return to Canadian requirements and the manufacturers' instructions.

4 Treat the anchor and clearance as part of compatibility

An anchor is not a generic tie-off point. CCOHS explains that anchor strength depends on its design, condition, orientation to loading, structural connection, and the supporting structure's capacity ([CCOHS, Fall Protection—Anchors](#)). A label on a lanyard cannot establish anchor suitability.

Anchor location affects the system. CCOHS advises considering free-fall and swing-fall distance, reducing swinging, and using an anchorage connector appropriate to the work ([CCOHS, Fall Protection—Anchors](#)). Clearance review must account for the connecting subsystem, deployed energy-absorber length where applicable, worker height, lower-level hazards, swing path, and manufacturer allowances ([CCOHS, Fall Arrest Systems](#)).

This is why an equipment order should never promise that a setup will prevent contact with the ground, structure, or equipment below. That conclusion belongs in the approved fall-protection plan and the competent technical review required for the site.

5 Review energy absorption, lifelines, and environmental conditions together

Compatibility includes the connecting subsystem and its environment. The lanyard, energy absorber, SRL, lifeline, rail device, or horizontal lifeline must be the type identified for the system and work conditions in its instructions. CCOHS advises using equipment appropriate to the other components present, including wire rope, synthetic rope, cable, or rail arresters ([CCOHS, Fall Arrest Systems](#)).

Document expected exposure: sharp edges, heat, flame, welding, corrosives, water, moving equipment, restricted access, and line routing. CCOHS advises workers to protect equipment from sharp edges, heat, flame, and corrosive substances ([CCOHS, Fall Protection Plan](#)). Check the instructions for permitted applications, installation, inspection, storage, cleaning, and removal-from-service rules. Replacing an energy-absorbing lanyard with an SRL, changing anchor height, rerouting a lifeline, or adding a connector can affect clearance, swing, loading, and rescue access. Treat each as a system-review trigger.

6 A buyer's compatibility review before release

Before ordering or issuing fall-protection equipment, use this concise review with the appropriate site and technical stakeholders:

1. **Define the system and task.** Identify the worker-to-anchor path and approved method.
2. **List every component.** Include the harness connection point, connecting subsystem, connectors, anchorage connector, anchor, and any rail or horizontal lifeline.
3. **Gather current manufacturer instructions.** Confirm the exact model or product family, allowed use, prohibited connections, inspection requirements, and any written cross-product approval.
4. **Confirm the physical connection and load path.** Check that the proposed mating parts close, lock, and are used in the approved orientation. Do not approve a connection based on appearance alone.

5. **Send clearance, swing, and anchor questions to the approved planning process.** Record the anchor location; reserve suitability decisions for authorized site processes.
6. **Confirm the rescue plan.** CCOHS says rescue procedures should be in place before work and designated rescuers need suitable training and accessible equipment (CCOHS, [Fall Protection Plan](#)).
7. **Keep the evidence.** Retain the instructions, configuration, inspection status, and approvals. After a qualified reviewer has confirmed the complete system requirements, [explore harnesses](#) to support the approved selection process.

7 Inspect, manage change, and stop when information is missing

Compatibility needs to be maintained, not assumed forever. CCOHS says all equipment or systems should be inspected before use and that a competent person should decide whether equipment with identified issues is used, repaired, or removed from service (CCOHS, [Fall Arrest Systems](#)). For federally regulated workplaces, the regulations also require inspection before each work shift in accordance with the fall-protection plan ([Justice Laws, section 12.09](#)). Follow the stricter or additional requirements that apply to the work.

Inspect equipment, labels, webbing, hardware, connectors, anchor condition, and the system arrangement under the instructions and plan. If a component is damaged, subjected to a fall event, missing instructions, or creates connection uncertainty, keep it out of service pending the required review. CCOHS advises that anchors be assessed after a fall by the manufacturer or a professional engineer competent in fall-protection systems (CCOHS, [Fall Protection—Anchors](#)).

8 Limitations and SME review note

This draft does not determine compliance, anchor capacity, clearance, engineering adequacy, rescue capability, certification status, or product suitability for any workplace. Before publication, have a qualified Canadian fall-protection SME and the responsible site team review the final wording against current manufacturer instructions, the approved rescue plan, CSA requirements available to the organization, and the legislation in the relevant jurisdiction. Federal regulatory examples in this article do not establish requirements for provincially or territorially regulated workplaces.

9 Talk with Total Group about a documented equipment review

Need help organizing an equipment compatibility review for an industrial site? Contact Total Group to discuss your task information, existing equipment records, and the documentation needed for a practical, site-specific review.