

# Technical Bulletin

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## Safety harnesses - working at height and overside

*The Club's Ship Inspectors often find that incorrect safety harnesses are being used for working at height and over the ship's side.*

Some ships are still supplied with belt type harnesses which can lead to severe damage to internal organs and also spinal damage or death if the wearer falls from any height.

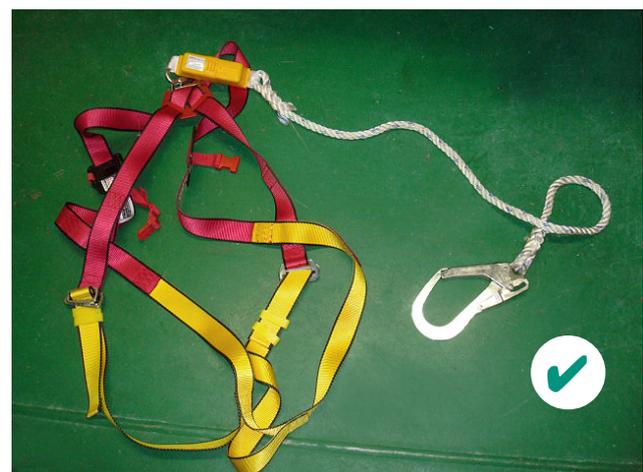


**Incorrect belt type harness**

Other vessels have the correct '5 point' safety harnesses onboard but they are not fitted with 'fall arrest' devices on the safety lines. This can result in serious injury should the wearer fall onto the safety line. Fall arresters act as 'shock absorbers' and will slow the fall gradually over a short distance rather than instantaneously.



**Correct 5 point harness with fall arrester**



**Correct 5 point harness with fall arrester**

The *ISM Code* section 1.2.2.2 requires that:

*"the Company should....assess all identified risks to its personnel...and establish appropriate safeguards..."*

The *Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seamen* states in chapter 4:

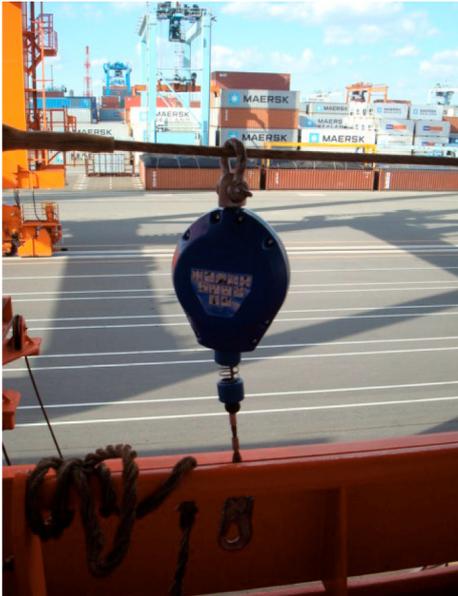
*"It is the responsibility of the employer to ensure that workers are provided with suitable personal protective equipment where it is needed... as a general rule, personal protective equipment should be supplied at no cost to the worker."*

Therefore, should a serious injury result from the use of the wrong type of safety harness, the employer can be held liable. The Club would strongly advise that the

correct type of safety harnesses, including fall arrest equipment, are supplied to all vessels.

The webbing and lanyard should be inspected regularly for cuts, abrasions, degradation, damage to stitching/

**Correct securing arrangements for working over the side. The photos below show a safety wire rigged above a gangway and fitted with a fall arresting 'inertia block'. The block will allow freedom of movement but will lock (like a car safety belt) if pulled suddenly**



splicing (which can significantly reduce the strength of the harness), partially deployed fall arrester etc. Equipment with defects or which has already been used to arrest a fall should be renewed.

Where work is to be carried out over the side of the vessel (for example, when rigging a gangway) it would also be prudent to provide a securing arrangement that allows proper freedom of movement for personnel without the safety line having to be disconnected during work.