



October 9 — Tied Off, But to What?

Contractor was 12 feet off the ground and tied off to a 3 inch pipe hanger that was 1/2" all thread.

Told his supervisor so he could get a better anchor point.

Being Tied Off Is Only Part of the Protection

A contractor was working approximately 12 feet above the ground and was wearing fall protection. However, the employee was tied off to a 3-inch pipe hanger supported by 1/2-inch all-thread.

The concern was recognized and brought to the contractor's supervisor so a better anchor point could be identified before the work continued.

This observation is a good reminder that simply seeing a worker wearing a harness and connected to something doesn't tell us whether the entire fall protection setup is appropriate. The connection point matters. A tie off point needs to be suitable for its intended purpose not simply convenient, nearby, or something that appears sturdy.

Before connecting, take the time to identify where you are going to tie off and make sure the selected location is appropriate. If there is any uncertainty about an anchor point, don't guess based on its appearance. Stop and get the right person involved to determine a better location.

This observation also shows the value of looking beyond the obvious. Someone could have walked by, seen that the contractor was wearing a harness and tied off, and assumed everything was okay. Instead, the observer looked at what the worker was actually connected to, recognized the concern, and spoke up.

Hazards

- Fall from approximately 12 feet
- Unsuitable tie-off location
- Anchor point not adequate for the intended use
- Failure of the selected connection point during a fall
- Serious injury from a fall to a lower level
- Assuming that being connected automatically means the fall-protection setup is safe

Words of Wisdom

A harness and lanyard can only protect you as well as the point they're connected to. Don't tie off to something simply because it's convenient to make sure your anchor point is appropriate before trusting it with your life.

Pause and Think

- Before you tie off, do you know whether the selected anchor point is appropriate?
- Are you choosing an anchor because it is suitable, or simply because it is close?
- Do you look at what other employees are actually tied off to not just whether they're wearing fall protection?
- If you're unsure about an anchor point, do you know who to ask before continuing?
- Would you trust the selected anchor point to perform as intended if a fall actually occurred?

Closing Thought

Being tied off is not the finish line. Know what you're connected to, make sure it's appropriate for the job, and speak up when a tie-off point doesn't look right.