



January 14, 2000

OSHA Docket Office  
Docket S206C, Room N2625  
U.S Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Avenue NW  
Washington D.C. 20210

Docket Officer:

The purpose of this letter is to provide comments to the Advanced Notice of Proposed Rule Making (ANPRM), Docket No. S-206C issued Wednesday, July 14, 1999 regarding Safety Standards for Fall Protection in the construction industry. This is a joint response which has been agreed upon by the National Telecommunications Safety Panel, representing the major telecommunications companies in the United States (see attached list of represented companies). We collectively provide comment to the following issues in the ANPRM.

**Issue 6. What Criteria Should Be Used for Restraint Systems**

The telecommunications companies represented do not have an issue with the other fall restraint criteria as applied to Subpart M with the exception of its application to aerial lifts, bucket trucks and other vehicle mounted elevating and rotating work platforms. The appropriate locations for this subject should be exclusively in Subpart L, 1926.453 (b)(2)(v), Aerial Lifts; and Subpart F, 1910.67, (c)(2)(v) Vehicle-Mounted, Elevating and Rotating Work Platforms. We believe that the language in these two sections should be identical and changed as follows:

*“The following two defined systems shall be considered as approved fall restraint and fall arrest for aerial lifts, bucket trucks and other vehicle mounted elevating and rotating work platforms:*

- a. *A restraint system is a body belt and lanyard or a full body harness and lanyard designed to keep the occupant within the platform. The lanyard will be attached to an ANSI approved anchorage point and rigged such to allow for a maximum of a two foot (.6 m) range of motion within the platform.*
  
- b. *An arrest system is a full body harness & deceleration device that shall be rigged such that an employee can neither fall more than six feet (1.8m) nor contact any lower level, and is attached to an ANSI approved anchorage.”*

This wording would encompass construction and maintenance activities in aerial lifts, bucket trucks and other vehicle mounted elevating and rotating work platforms. We believe that a body belt should be acceptable for use with a "restraint system". However, we strongly recommend that OSHA allow the employer the option of using a "fall restraint" or a "fall arrest system" at its discretion.

In addition, in order to ensure bucket truck criteria remains exclusively in 1926.453 and 1910.67, we strongly recommend that the following note, added on 1/1/98, should be removed from Subpart L, 1926.453, (b) (2) (v): *“Note to paragraph (b)(2)(v): As of January 1, 1998, subpart M of this part (1926.502(d) provides that body belts are not acceptable as part of a personal fall arrest system. The use of a body belt in a tethering system or in a restraint system is acceptable and is regulated under 1926.502(e)”*

These proposed changes would provide a clear and consistent direction regarding aerial lifts, bucket trucks and other vehicle mounted elevating and rotating work platforms fall protection in the General Industry and Construction standards. By nature of the proposed parallel language of 1926.453 and 1910.67, the employer's compliance obligation and OSHA's enforcement efforts would be the same for these work operations regardless whether the work is considered construction or maintenance.

#### **Issue 7. Whether the Strength Requirements for Anchorage Points for Personal Fall Arrest Systems, Positioning Device Systems, and Restraint Systems Should Be Changed**

We would recommend that OSHA define only two requirements for anchorage points. One requirement for personal fall arrest systems (5000 Lbs. per employee or that the system maintain a safety factor of two) and another requirement for fall restraint and positioning device systems (3000 lbs. or two times the potential impact, whichever is less). Having separate requirements for three different systems is too confusing.

#### **Issue 8. Whether the Standard's Prompt Rescue Requirements Should Be Changed**

With the proposed changes above to the 1926.453 and 1910.67, we propose that the wording currently in 1926.502 (d)(20) be changed to the following:

*“Where fall arrest systems are in use, the employer shall provide for prompt rescue of employees in the event of a fall from a elevated location or shall assure that employees are able to rescue themselves from locations other than an aerial lift, bucket truck or vehicle mounted elevating and rotating work platform.”*

To support our position regarding rescue, the National Telecommunications Safety Panel wrote a letter to OSHA dated July 22, 1998 addressing this issue. Sprint Corporation also corresponded with OSHA on this issue on March 2, 1998. The Panel still holds these positions on the subject of rescue.

By making the changes suggested above under Issue 6, the prompt rescue would then be dictated by the employer based on specific variables and circumstances as outlined in OSHA's January 21, 1999 written response to Sprint Corporation. The telecommunications companies represented do not have an issue with the other rescue provisions as applied to Subpart M with the exception to the issue of how it is now applied to aerial lifts (bucket trucks).

**Issue 10. Whether Body Belts Incorporated Into Full Body Harnesses Provide Appropriate Employee Protection in a Fall**

Issue 10 addresses the point of appropriate fall protection if a full body harness is used that has a body belt incorporated into the harness. If the manufacturer of such a device has tested and documented the adequacy of the device distributing the forces of a fall and has provided detailed instruction on the use of the device, i.e., the difference between side D-rings and back D-rings, then this clearly becomes a training issue and should not be regulated by any fall protection standard.

The telecommunications industry represented by the members of the National Telecommunications Safety Panel appreciate the opportunity to comment on this very important issue of fall protection. We hope OSHA looks favorably upon our suggestions and recommendations that will clarify fall protection requirements in our industry.

Questions regarding these comments may be addressed to me at:

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Area Manager-Safety  
Southwestern Bell Telephone  
1010 Pine Street, Room 15-E-7  
St. Louis, MO 63101

Sincerely,

Charles E. Hill  
Chairman, National  
Telecommunications Safety Panel

Attachment:

CC: Members, National Telecommunications Safety Panel



Represented companies of the National Telecommunications Safety Panel:

Ameritech

AT&T

Bell Atlantic

BellSouth

Broadwing

GTE

Lucent Technologies

MCI WorldCom

Pacific Bell

Southern New England Telecommunications

Southwestern Bell

Sprint Communications Company LP

