Rescue Procedure for Working at Height above Safety Nets

The information contained within this document is supplementary to the site specific emergency plan and company accident reporting procedure.

Under the Construction Design Management Regulations 2007, The Client who has control of the construction site must have first aid and emergency procedures in place. The First Aid at Work regulations 1981 also applies to construction sites and the Approved Codes of Practice state the types of facilities that must be made available for emergencies.

Required equipment

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For the effective rescue of a person from the safety nets the following equipment must be made available by the Client/Customer:

- Qualified First Aider on site.
- A means of contacting the emergency services.
- A stretcher board.
- Suitable means of securing an injured person to the stretcher board or Mobile Elevating Work Platform (MEWP) such as straps/ties or rope.
- A means to cut the safety netting if required.
- Where agreed in advance the use of a MEWP with qualified operator or suitable alternative, e.g. “Man Rider” cages, etc.

In the unlikely event of a person being injured by a fall into a safety net, the following recovery methods should be adopted.

Please note that the best method of recovery will depend upon the extent of the injury. The fixing foreman should ensure the following procedure is followed;

- A member of the installation team shall initiate/co-ordinate the rescue procedure. This will usually be the charge-hand/foreman.
- Locate the nearest qualified first aider to carry out an injury assessment.

- Do not enter the net until an injury assessment has been conducted.
- If necessary, call the emergency services.
- If the first aider dictates that the casualty should not be moved from the “as landed” position (e.g. suspected spinal injury) do not move the net until specialist advice is provided by the emergency services. Visually assess all connections are correctly fitted and not affected by the fall impact.

Option 1. Self-rescue

By positioning the safety net as close to the working level, the risk of injury when falling is significantly reduced.

Most use of a safety net will involve a “stagger and foot down” or a “trip and stumble” into the net. In these situations the “faller” will gradually be able to climb out of the net and report the incident.

Option 2. Where Self-rescue is not possible

It is important that movement is minimised, and if the casualty needs to be approached for assessment, this is best carried out by a single person. A competent first aider or medical professional must make an assessment of the condition of the casualty prior to selection of the means of recovery.

It is recommended the emergency services are contacted immediately.

Option 3. Recovery from below; where the distances from the floor level below to the sag of the net allows reach.

Recovery from below should be possible where the net allows reach from below due to the sag of the net where the casualty cannot self –rescue out of the net.

Where the injury is severe, and movement of the casualty will be detrimental and require assistance, a stretcher/board should be brought up to the casualty from below the net, held by other operatives, and positioned underneath the casualty. Ties should be passed over the board and casualty and secured. A hole should then be cut in the net around the casualty and board, releasing both. The casualty can then be carried to safety to receive attention. Alternatively single air bags with domed indentation can be used to lower the casualty to ground level.
Option 4. Recovery from Above

In the event that a person needs assistance within the net, a maximum of two other persons can enter the net. They should crawl, or roll, to maintain their balance, however they can walk if there is a purlin, etc. they provide support. In the industrial roofing application, it is most likely that the purlins will be in position before the net. These can provide stability and support to either the casualty, or the recovery team. They should approach the casualty slowly and, if possible, from opposite sides, as there will be significant movement within the net and this could be detrimental to the injury. They should note that all within the net will tend to “move” towards the low point (the location of the highest load) and therefore should stay apart for as long as is practical. If the casualty can be readily moved, they can assist him out of the net using purlins for additional support. A board can be used to support the casualty, laid on the purlins or slid within the net itself.

Option 5. Recovery from Below where the sag of the net doesn’t allow reach. Examples include areas such as atriums or link ways.

Similar to method two but used where the injury is severe, and movement of the casualty will be detrimental and require assistance and the sag of the net doesn’t reduce the reach height of the casualty sufficiently to proceed with the above rescue.

A stretcher/board should be brought up to the casualty from below the net (Using MEWP’s or similar) and positioned underneath the casualty. Ties should be passed over the board and casualty and both connected to the access equipment. A hole should then be cut in the net around the casualty and board, releasing both. The casualty can then be brought to the ground to receive attention.

NOTE

Any safety net that has been subjected to “use in anger” should be removed from service. The extent to which the net has been stretched will be affected by the fall energy and the impact area. The net should be quarantined, and fully examined by a competent examiner (authorised by the manufacturer) before being used again. If any doubt exists as to the condition of the net, it should be destroyed to prevent future use.

This document is for guidance only. Further written rescue procedures may be necessary subject to the specific site conditions.