

## **Fall Protection Guidelines**

### **IATSE Local 635**

IATSE Local 635 has always considered safety as one of the most important issues in the workplace. The entertainment industry as a whole has been prone to keep the lights dim and turn a blind eye to unsafe work practices in many different areas and activities which regrettably has led to countless stories of preventable worker injuries and deaths. One of the areas that needs illumination is unprotected and unsafe climbing practices. We feel that strong methods must be used to change these habits. In this light Local 635 has decided to adopt a policy based on the findings and standards set down by the U.S. Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) regarding the issue of fall protection.

Local 635 has followed the most up to date fall protection procedures and systems that require the use of body harnesses for more than fifteen years. We have modified our position regarding the types of harnesses and when they are to be used several times during this period. The industry now stands at a wonderful turning point where the technology is available and affordable to protect all workers from most any fall hazard associated with working on lighting trusses, scenery, projection platforms and any number of the other various show elements. Since the Federal & State Laws are clear, in that fall protection is required, we can no longer ignore safe work practices nor do we choose to be involved in projects with other vendors who do not share our concern for worker or public safety and compliance with the law.

We also do not believe that these issues should be arbitrated during the load-in or load-out process as that is clearly counterproductive for most everyone involved. To this end we want to raise the issue well in advance, so that fall protection can be provided without exorbitant cost, and to clarify what is considered acceptable.

In 1992 ANSI published the Z359.1 standard, which sets reasonable standards for the manufacture, use, and testing of most fall protection equipment. We would look for evidence of compliance with this standard in determining what equipment would be acceptable. Fortunately most harnesses, lanyards, lifelines etc. that comply with this standard are permanently marked as being in compliance. This is an easy way to screen equipment that workers or employers present as acceptable fall protection equipment.

One issue that is not clearly addressed by the Z359.1 standard is the use of horizontal lifelines. Although not addressed by the 1991 ANSI Z359.1 committee, all reputable fall protection sources, including references in Cal OSHA and Federal OSHA, require that due to the complexity in calculating forces in horizontal lifelines, they must be designed and installed under the supervision of a qualified person. Because of this requirement, we would look to the design statements by whoever designed the system to make our determination of whether a particular system or

installation is acceptable.

Please know that if at times it seems that we are being too particular with regard to the details of a system, it is only because a lack of attention to one or more of these details can and will result in the failure of an otherwise good, dependable and compliant system. Fall protection systems are somewhat unique in that they are only under full load when they are stopping a fall and failure at that point will most often end with tragic results that could have been so easily avoided.

We know you join us in considering and recognizing these very serious issues. Through your help and the industrywide adoption of State and Federal OSHA requirements we will succeed in making the entertainment industry a much safer place today and for those who follow us in the future.

Special thanks to:

The U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA)

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