

SAFE USE OF RETRACTABLE FALL ARREST BLOCKS (SRLs)

Applies to: Inertia Reels, Self-Retracting Lifelines (SRLs), Fall Arrest Blocks, and similar devices

Purpose

Retractable fall arrest blocks are personal protective devices designed to automatically arrest a fall by locking a retractable line when sudden acceleration is detected. They are used to provide mobility with continuous fall protection when working at height. This leaflet provides guidance for safe selection, operation, and maintenance to prevent fall incidents or equipment failure.

Before Use

- Inspect the block – Check the casing, webbing or wire rope, connectors, and retraction mechanism for damage, corrosion, or contamination.
- Verify certification – Ensure the SRL has a valid inspection tag and is within its service and re-certification date.
- Confirm WLL (Working Load Limit) – Ensure the block is rated for the user's weight including clothing, tools, and PPE.
- Check the locking function – Pull the line sharply to verify the brake locks instantly and retracts smoothly.
- Confirm anchor point – The SRL must be attached to a certified fall-arrest anchor point rated to at least 12 kN.
- Check connectors – Ensure karabiners and snap hooks have self-closing, self-locking gates.
- Confirm mounting – The block should be positioned above the user where possible to minimise free fall distance.
- Ensure operator competence – Only trained personnel should use fall arrest equipment.

During Operation

- Connect the SRL to the dorsal D-ring of a full-body fall arrest harness.
- Ensure free movement of the line during work; do not allow kinks, twists, or sharp bends.
- Maintain vertical alignment – Avoid side loading or working outside the device's designed range of motion.
- Keep the line under light tension; do not allow excessive slack.
- Avoid working around sharp edges or abrasive surfaces unless the SRL is edge-rated.
- Use in conjunction with appropriate anchorage and rescue procedures.
- Maintain communication when multiple users are working at height.

Do Not

- Exceed the rated capacity of the block.
- Use if the line is frayed, cut, kinked, or contaminated with paint, oil, or chemicals.
- Modify, disassemble, or repair the SRL yourself.
- Tie knots in or wrap the line around structural members.
- Connect multiple users to a single fall arrest block.
- Use the SRL in fall restraint applications unless designed for dual use.
- Leave the block exposed to weather or chemicals when not in use.
- Use the device after it has arrested a fall — it must be quarantined and re-certified.

After Use

- Retract the line fully and ensure smooth operation before storage.
- Clean the casing and line (webbing or wire) using mild soap and water only.
- Inspect for damage or corrosion before returning to storage.
- Store in a clean, dry environment away from heat, moisture, and UV light.
- Tag out any SRL that has been dropped, impacted, or deployed during a fall.
- Report faults immediately to your supervisor or safety officer.

Safety Reminders

- Always follow the manufacturer's operating instructions and inspection schedule.
- Perform a pre-use function test before every shift.
- Never attach to uncertified or improvised anchor points.
- Ensure a rescue plan is in place before working at height.
- Use compatible full-body harnesses and connectors.
- Have all fall arrest equipment inspected at least every 6 months by a competent person.
- Never reuse an SRL that has arrested a fall until fully re-certified.

Support and Maintenance

For service, inspection, and spare parts, contact your local Lifting Gear and Safety Depot

Depot List

Bristol: 0117 9714883
Avonmouth: 0117 9550456
Newport: 01633 334450
Port Talbot: 01639 540007
Pembroke: 01646 574000
Plymouth: 01752 474488
Fareham: 01329 550988
Redruth: 01209 703990