

SAFE USE OF RESCUE SAFETY HARNESSSES

Applies to: Confined space rescue harnesses, rescue-rated full-body harnesses with shoulder or front rescue attachment points

Purpose

Rescue harnesses are specialised full-body harnesses used for lifting, lowering, or recovering personnel from confined spaces, shafts, or restricted areas. They include additional attachment points for vertical retrieval. This leaflet provides guidance to ensure safe rescue operations and prevent injury during entry or extraction.

Before Use

- Inspect all components – Webbing, stitching, shoulder retrieval loops, dorsal/front D-rings, and hardware must be free from cuts, burns, chemical damage, corrosion, or deformation.
- Verify certification – Ensure the harness and rescue lanyards/devices are within inspection intervals.
- Check rescue attachment points – Confirm front and/or shoulder D-rings are intact and approved for raising/lowering personnel.
- Ensure compatibility – Use only with certified retrieval equipment (winches, tripods, fall-arrest/rescue blocks).
- Confirm correct fit – Adjust leg, chest, and shoulder straps for secure, comfortable support.
- Check the rescue system setup – Tripods, davit arms, or overhead anchors must be correctly installed and rated for personnel lifting.
- Ensure operator and rescuer competence – Only trained personnel should attach, test, and use rescue equipment.

During Use

- Use the designated rescue or retrieval points for vertical lifting/lowering.
- Keep communication open between entrant and top-man/attendant.
- Maintain smooth, controlled operation when raising or lowering a worker.
- Keep all equipment free of entanglement hazards in confined spaces.
- Monitor entrant condition continuously during entry operations.
- Ensure safe exclusion zones around the lifting/rescue system.

Do Not

- Use a rescue harness for fall arrest unless rated for dual use.
- Use equipment that has been shock-loaded without re-inspection.
- Allow anyone to enter a confined space without a rescue plan in place.
- Modify, knot, or field-repair any part of the harness.
- Use incompatible winches, karabiners, or rescue blocks.
- Perform rescue operations without competent personnel present.

After Use

- Clean all webbing and metal parts after confined space work.
- Inspect for contamination (chemicals, sewage, oils) and remove from service if affected.
- Dry thoroughly before storage to prevent mould or degradation.

- Store in a clean, ventilated environment away from UV and heat.
- Log each use as part of confined space rescue equipment records.

Safety Reminders

Always follow the confined space rescue plan and permit-to-work requirements.

- Use continuous atmospheric monitoring when applicable.
- Ensure tripods/davit arms are correctly positioned and weighted or anchored.
- Never exceed equipment rated capacities.
- Conduct annual or more frequent inspections by a competent person.
- Practice rescue drills regularly.

Support and Maintenance

For service, inspection, and replacements, 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