

Fall Protection: One size doesn't fit all?

Written by Sheq Management
Tuesday, 07 February 2017 21:15



When you think of falling, you think “pain”. However, in some industries, a fall can result in a whole new level of pain and injury, and can even result in death

No two falls are the same, which is why 3M looks at the “Science of Safety” and not just overall fall safety.

This was a key theme at the company’s stand at A-OSH 2017.

“We went for an interactive approach to showcase a total solution to the market, rather than a product offering. The Science of Safety is about promoting long-term behavioural change,” says Shivani Pillay, marketing manager, 3M Personal Safety Division.

“At 3M the Science of Safety gives customers options to select the most suitable product for the specific purpose. Utilising the company’s industry-leading breadth and depth in personal protective equipment (PPE) also helps to optimise protection and fit. The idea this year for the exhibition was to embrace the three pillars of 3M Science of Safety, which are selection, training and fit validation,” Pillay adds.

Scientific solutions are based on scientific facts about various dangers, and the science of falling has been studied over many years to determine actual impacts of various weights falling from different heights, as well as the ability of the available fall-prevention equipment to reduce impact.

As new processes are set up in construction, mining and other industries that present different risks of falling, 3M continues its research and development into new materials that offer better shock absorption, portability of connection devices for harnesses, and fast and effective fall rescue plans.

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Weight is a huge factor determining the extent of injuries. It therefore makes sense that the less weight a worker is carrying, the fewer injuries he or she may incur when falling, or breaking the fall.

Today, full body harnesses are exceptionally light and redistribute the body's weight across the whole body from the shoulder area all the way to the hips and legs, immediately reducing the prospect of shoulder and neck injuries.

"Ergonomics is taken into consideration when designing harnesses. At A-OSH the availability of virtual reality assisted visitors to understand the impact of a fall without the correct equipment, as well as effectiveness of fall-protection equipment when working at height," says Anderson Cilliers, market segment leader, 3M Fall Protection..

3M products conform to numerous international standards, including the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) and global health and safety standards.

Because 3M's worker and health safety strategy is designed to help workers return home safely and lead healthier lives, the company conducts proper training with every customer that requires it. It also ensures that the products purchased for fall safety are fit for purpose, regardless of the industry in which they will be used.

"When it comes to safety at heights, we go to great lengths to ensure the product is one that has been researched and tested for maximum efficiency. The Science of Safety utilised by 3M can support customers in the selection, training and validation of their PPE, which can lead to a more effective health and safety programme. Our support is flexible, which means our services can be tailor-made to an organisation's unique needs," concludes Cilliers.