



HSE URGES CAUTION OVER “RETRACTABLE TYPE FALL ARRESTERS” APRIL 2006

Following the interim findings of a research project the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have issued a reminder to industry on the dangers of misusing retractable type fall arresters (commonly referred to as Inertia Reels/Blocks).



It is evident from the findings of the research report that retractable type fall arresters, used to protect workers whilst working at height are commonly being misused in circumstances that they have not been tested for. As a result they are creating safety hazards and an increased risk of a fatality occurring.

All industry sectors are exposed to the risks presented by falls from height and the findings of the report re-enforce the need for employers and workers to ensure that this “specialist equipment” is used in the correct way.

The Inertia reels should only be used in the vertical plane with an overhead anchor unless the manufacturers instructions clearly state otherwise. If this equipment is used in any other way that that instructed by the manufacturer or combined with other components in a fall arrest system, it may be unsafe and could result in a serious injury or fatality.

Additionally, some manufacturers and suppliers in the UK are failing to provide adequate instructions and information in order to use the products safely, which is adding to the problem.

The HSE has urged caution over “The European Standard” for testing as this does not cover retractable type fall arresters being tested for use over edges, which is sometimes how they are used in the horizontal plane.

Problems with this method of use include:

- The retractable lanyard may break.
- The braking system may be overloaded to point of failure.
- The fall may not be arrested in the distance available.

Duties of Manufacturers/Suppliers/ Employers/Employees:

1. **Manufacturers/suppliers must provide adequate information and instructions with any equipment supplied.**
2. **Manufacturers to test and provide information on the safe and correct use and the limits of use.**
3. **Employers must adequately assess work activities to ensure that the correct selection of equipment is made and that it is fully suitable for the task.**
4. **Employers must provide employees with sufficient information, instruction and training to enable them to use the PPE correctly and keep it in efficient working order and in a good state of repair.**
5. **Employers to ensure that PPE is inspected maintained and tested as required by legislation.**
6. **Employees must not misuse or adapt PPE and only use it in accordance with their training and report any defects or issues affecting the safe use of the equipment immediately to their employer.**

Definition:

A retractable type fall arrester is a device with an encased flexible and extendable lanyard that has a self braking and locking function with an automatic return function for the lanyard into the casing the European Standard is BS EN 360: 2002, Personal Protective Equipment against falls from height, Retractable type fall arresters.

For more information on this or any other issue, please contact us on... **01908 255909** or enquiry@4seerisk.com

