Subject: Capacity of ANSI Z359 Fall Protection Equipment

QUESTION: Does the ANSI Z359 Fall Protection Code allow workers under 130 or over 310 pounds to use ANSI rated fall protection equipment?

ANSWER: Determining who uses Z359 fall protection equipment is not within the scope of the Z359 committee. The Z359 standards do not prohibit any worker from using any fall protection equipment they choose.

The capacity range for fall protection equipment covered within the Z359 standards is 130 to 310 pounds. This capacity has been discussed in detail over several years and the committee has decided to maintain the capacity range at 130-310 pounds due to a lack of information to support expanding this weight range.

There is a lack of scientific data to support changing the current capacity. It is unknown how the human body will react to higher G-forces and increased arresting forces. Fall protection equipment marked with capacities less or greater than 130-310 pounds are outside the scope of ANSI Z359 standards.

OSHA has a clause (in its construction and general industry regulations) stating that workers in excess of 310 pounds can use fall arrest systems provided that OSHA’s testing criteria and protocols are modified appropriately to provide proper protection. Equipment manufacturers conduct their own testing, outside the scope of ANSI Z359, and apply this clause when testing their equipment for heavier workers and mark the item as meeting applicable OSHA requirements. OSHA does not name a maximum capacity, so equipment is being provided for workers in excess of 310 pounds. Test weights and conversion factors used are based upon OSHA test methods and not ANSI test methods.

Equipment outside the scope of ANSI Z359 should not be labeled as meeting the standards. The concern has been raised by users that equipment labeled as ANSI-compliant with different capacities is an issue since a user cannot determine from the label what test criteria has been applied. Users could make the assumption that an item with a different capacity is ANSI compliant, which is not the case. ANSI Z359 standards have a user capacity of 130 – 310 pounds.

However, it should be noted that selection and use of fall protection equipment is up to the end-users, and the Z359 standards do not prohibit any end-user from using any fall protection equipment they choose. It is important that health considerations be taken into account for end-users above the established weight range when using fall arrest systems in particular.

For more information about the Z359 Committee, the A10 Committee, and fall protection/arrest standards please visit:

www.asse.org/departments/standards/fall_protectionarrest_z359/

ASSE – Home of the ANSI/ASSE Z359 Fall Protection Code