An Update on the ANSI/ASSE Z359.1 Standard – New Revision Pending

Just an update that the revision of the ANSI/ASSE Z359.1 Standard is at ANSI right now and we are awaiting final administrative review/approval. The Z359.1 Standard is fundamentally changing from the structure you have seen in the past with the most recent version being published in 2007.

Scope from the pending revised standard: "The Fall Protection Code is a set of standards that covers program management; system design; training; qualification and testing; equipment, component and system specifications for the processes used to protect workers at height in a managed fall protection program. This standard identifies those standards and establishes their role in the Code and their interdependence."

Historic scope, which is changing: "This standard establishes requirements for the performance, design, marking, qualification, instruction, training, inspection, use, maintenance, and removal from service of connectors, full body harnesses, lanyards, energy absorbers, anchorage connectors, fall arresters, vertical lifelines, and self-retracting lanyards comprising personal fall arrest systems for users within the capacity range of 130 to 310 pounds (59 to 140 kg)."

The first edition of ANSI/ASSE Z359.1, published in 1992, was the first American National Standard for personal fall arrest systems in non-construction occupations. It established requirements for performance, design, marking, qualification, instruction, training, inspection, use, maintenance and removal from service of full body harnesses, connectors, lanyards, energy absorbers, anchorage connectors, fall arresters, vertical lifelines and self-retracting lanyards.

This standard was reaffirmed in 1999 and revised in 2007. By the time the next revision appeared in 2007, it was accompanied by new ANSI/ASSE Z359 standards for managed fall protection program elements, positioning and travel restraint systems, and rescue systems. Additionally, the definitions common to all ANSI/ASSE Z359 standards were published in a separate standard. In the years since then, new standards have been developed for the products and systems covered by ANSI/ASSE Z359.1-2007, and the requirements of that standard have been superseded. This set of ANSI/ASSE Z359 standards is referred to collectively as the Fall Protection Code.
This edition of ANSI/ASSE Z359.1 therefore is a new standard in regards to technical content, not a simple revision of the requirements in the previous editions. The intent of this standard is to provide a key to understanding and applying the standards within the ANSI/ASSE Z359 Fall Protection Code, as well as a single point of reference to define compliance with the Code. This will allow organizations the ability to identify a single standard when accepting the code as a single document, ANSI/ASSE Z359.1.

The Fall Protection Code encompasses standards for personal fall protection systems that incorporate a full body harness, intended to protect the user against falls from a height either by preventing or arresting free falls. In general, systems that prevent a free fall are preferable to systems that arrest a free fall. The types of systems that shall be addressed by this Fall Protection Code include:

- a. Fall restraint systems
- b. Work positioning systems
- c. Rope access systems
- d. Fall arrest systems
- e. Rescue systems

While a majority of the criteria within the product standards for the ANSI/ASSE Z359 Fall Protection Code is prepared to create consistency and minimum requirements for products offered by manufacturers and distributors, there is also a sizeable amount of information that is relevant for the user’s organization. In addition to this standard, ANSI/ASSE Z359.2 Minimum Requirements for a Comprehensive Managed Fall Protection Program should be the first document that someone within a user’s organization should become familiar. Also, there is relevant information within the product standards that provides guidance on the use and limitations associated with the specific product category. Manufacturers and distributors are also required to provide this information in the instruction material provided with the product.

The interdependence of the ANSI/ASSE Z359 standards is key to their use as a Fall Protection Code. Although the equipment aspect of fall protection is likely the most visible element, all of the standards must be implemented to create a safe and truly compliant fall protection system and program. For example, training, fall hazard surveys and procedures are critical to safely identifying, evaluating and controlling fall hazards based on the hierarchy of controls. The ANSI/ASSE Z359.2 standard contains these items and should be integral to your overall program. Furthermore, it is becoming more common, and in some instances a requirement, that a qualified person who is commonly an engineer, design the overall system. This act of design includes selecting the system, ensuring strength of the anchorage(s), specifying equipment components, preparing use and rescue procedures,
and verifying the implementation of general and system-specific training. Requirements for engineered systems are found in ANSI/ASSE Z359.6.

The standards in the Fall Protection Code are constantly evolving, and are revised on a regular schedule in conformity to ANSI requirements. ANSI/ASSE Z359.1 will be kept up to date as new standards and revisions are developed and published. Note that the Code requires that all products meet the current version of the applicable standard when purchased. Product in use when new standards or revisions to existing standards become effective can continue to be used until they are removed from service.

Info on the current ANSI/ASSE Z359 standards in the Fall Protection Code:

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

ASSE will have more information on the standard shortly after notification of approval.

Thanks and Regards,

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