



## **BEST PRACTICE: SAFETY AT HEIGHTS**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The Partnership is committed to the practice of Safety at Heights wherever the potential exists for personnel falling from heights. A series of Best Practices will be developed that will address fall hazards associated with the Electric Transmission and Distribution industry. Best Practices will address fall hazards associated with, but not limited to, aerial tasks performed while working on wood/steel poles, metal/lattice structures, transformers, vehicles and associated equipment. The Best Practices will utilize fall protection hierarchy of fall hazard elimination or control of the fall hazard. The following shall be considered in designing a fall protection solution: elimination or substitution, passive fall protection, fall restraint, fall arrest and administrative controls. First consideration shall be given to the elimination of fall hazards. Where elimination of the fall hazard is not practical effective control of the fall hazard shall be used at all times.

### **SUBJECT: FALL PROTECTION WHEN PERFORMING AERIAL WORK ON WOOD POLES**

**PRACTICE STATEMENT:** Fall Protection Equipment (FPE) shall be used when ascending, descending, changing position and when in the working position while on a wood pole.

**PRACTICE DESCRIPTION:** Wood Pole Fall Restriction Device shall be “engaged” ground-to-ground when ascending, descending, changing position and when in the working position.

- When in the working position, Work Positioning Equipment may be used when rigged such that an employee cannot fall more than two feet.
- When climbing wood poles that have pole steps or other obstructions the hitch hike climbing method, utilizing the Work Positioning Equipment, may be used to ascend or descend when rigged such that an employee cannot fall more than two feet.
- Wood pole climbers shall be trained and competent in the care, use and inspection of components used to conform to this Best Practice. Employers should obtain comprehensive training from the manufacturer as to the equipment’s proper use (to include “train the trainer”). Employees must be trained in the selection and safe use of the equipment/system. This should include the following: Application limits; techniques used for proper adjusting of the equipment, methods of use, inspection, storage of the device and a demonstration of competency of device usage. Training shall only be conducted by qualified trainers. Refresher training shall be provided that will maintain employee’s competency in the use of required equipment.



- Prior to climbing any wood pole, an inspection of the pole shall be conducted. All components of the Fall Protection Equipment shall be inspected by the climber (per manufacturers' specifications) to ensure the device is fit for use.
- This Best Practice applies to all climbers including those that perform pole top rescue on wood poles. Rescue application should be pre-determined (as early as possible, but no later than during the pre-job briefing) based on rescue needs such as timeliness and consideration given to the characteristics of the structure that rescue is being performed on. Employers shall address rescue considerations and develop appropriate procedures that will allow successful performance of a given rescue technique for varied field conditions. Climbers shall be qualified in the methods identified to be used for rescue.
- Company policies shall apply when the conditions of this Best Practice cannot be met. Alternative work methods ensuring worker safety shall be identified, communicated to all affected workers, implemented and documented as part of the job briefing process.

#### **BENEFITS:**

**To eliminate injuries and fatalities associated with falls from Wood Poles.**

#### **REFERENCE:**

ANSI Z359 - 2007

CSA Z259.14-01

29 CFR 1926.500 - 503

The Texas A&M University System;

Texas Engineering Extension Service; Engineering, Utilities and Public Works Training Institute

Best practices utilized by OSP members for climbing wood poles.

IEEE 1307 –IEEE Standard for Fall Protection for Utility Work

#### **DEFINITIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS:**

- **Fall Protection Equipment (FPE)** – Any equipment, device or system that prevents an accidental fall from elevations or that mitigates the effect of such fall.
- **Wood Pole Fall Restriction Device** – A device that, when properly adjusted and combined with other subcomponents and elements, allows the climber to remain at his or her work position with both hands free and that performs a fall restriction function if the climber loses contact between his or her gaffs and the pole.
- **Work Positioning Equipment (WPE)** – Equipment used to support a worker on the pole so that the worker's hands are free when he or she reaches the work position. A pole strap, a lineman's body belt, and/or a lineman's harness and hooks/gaffs constitute Work Positioning Equipment.



## Questions & Answers

1. What are examples of suitable Wood Pole Fall Restricting Devices used while climbing wood poles?

A: Buckingham Bucksqueeze, Miller Stop Fall, Jelco Pole Choker, Scepter Pole Shark, Bashlin Pole Lariat, etc. These and other devices are commercially available today. Other devices may become available.

2. Will using two skids (pole straps) satisfy this best practice?

A: NO. One device must be approved Fall Restricting Equipment (i.e., Buckingham Bucksqueeze, Miller Stop Fall, Jelco Pole Choker, Scepter Pole Shark, Bashlin Pole Lariat, etc.).

3. How do I pass over an obstruction on the pole?

A: The Work Positioning Equipment shall be installed over, an obstruction when ascending, prior to disengaging the Wood Pole Fall Restricting Device.

4. What does “Engaged” mean?

A: Engaged is defined as Wood Pole Fall Restricting Device being properly mounted on the wood pole and used as per manufacturer’s instructions at all times while the climber is ascending, descending, changing position and when in the working position while on a wood pole.

5. In the Practice Description, what is meant by “unless Work Positioning Equipment is rigged such that an employee cannot fall more than two feet”?

A: Work Positioning Equipment shall be installed over an obstruction on the pole (telephone attachment, steps, arms, braces, etc.). The distance between the work positioning equipment and the obstruction shall be kept to a minimum so that, it will not permit a worker to fall more than two feet.

6. What is meant by inspection?

A: All poles shall be carefully inspected before climbing to ensure they are in safe condition for climbing.

1. Examples of equipment inspection include but are not limited to:

- Manufacturers’ user instructions.
- Checking of tool holders & loops, snaps, stitching, straps, D rings, and buckles for excessive wear or damage.
- Identifying proper fit and condition of the fall protection equipment.



7. Should fall protection be included in the “Pre-Job Briefing”?

A: Yes, fall protection should be planned and discussed, including appropriate rescue methods that apply to the conditions presented in the field. (Visually determine the climbing route, identify all potential hazards, and determine the control measures to be used).

8. Is Fall Protection Equipment required when transitioning from the pole to another device (i.e. baker board, ladder, etc.)?

A: Yes. Fall Protection Equipment shall be continuous by design (100% fall protection is maintained) for the purpose of transitioning.

9. Is a fall restriction device required during a pole top rescue?

A: Yes, unless existing field conditions exist, that would impact the timeliness (or other critical criteria) of the rescue in such a way, that use of the device would make the rescue procedure ineffective. If an alternate method (due to field conditions) is to be utilized, it must be discussed and documented and assurances made that rescue personnel are qualified to perform the rescue technique defined in the daily pre-job briefing.