

Safety Nets toolbox talk

A simple, 5 minute outline of what to cover in a toolbox talk on Safety Nets.



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The Health and Safety at Work (HSAW) Act 2015 requires all reasonably practicable steps must be taken to prevent injury at a workplace. A fall from height poses a severe risk of injury or death. When properly installed, safety nets can reduce the distance and impact of a fall to minimise the likelihood of harm.

There are no New Zealand standards that cover safety nets, but WorkSafe have published Best Practice Guidelines. To be effective, safety nets must be able to absorb all the energy from an impact and must be set up with enough clear space below to prevent collisions with any objects.

Why run a Safety Nets Toolbox Talk?

- Prevent unnecessary injury from working at heights by improving awareness and training in the use of safety nets
- Assist with understanding of legislative aspects
- Fewer injuries and not being impaired means higher productivity

Safety net classifications

Safety nets come in either knotted or unknotted varieties and have either a square (Q) or diamond (D) shaped mesh. Knotted nets lose capacity over time because the knots tighten slightly on impact. This is not the case for knotless nets.

CLASS	ENERGY ABSORPTION CAPACITY	MESH SIZE
A1	2.3 kJ	60 mm
A2	2.3 kJ	100 mm

B1	4.4 kJ	60 mm
B2	4.4 kJ	100 mm

Safety nets are classified as either class A or B depending on absorption capacity (2.3 kilojoules vs 4.4 kilojoules) and as either class 1 or 2 depending on mesh size (60 mm vs 100 mm). A risk assessment should be performed to identify which class is appropriate.

The net must be labelled with the manufacturers name and code, date of manufacture, class, mesh size, configuration, energy absorption capacity, and a unique ID. If there is no label, or if the label is not legible, the safety net should not be used.

Installation of safety nets

- Safety nets should be installed by a qualified person, in consultation with everyone who is going to use the net.
- The net should be examined for damage before it is installed and should not be used if any damage is found.
- The net should be installed close to the working platform and attached to a strong supporting structure using tie ropes, timber fixings or karabiners.
- Nets should be overlapped by at least 2 m if overlapping is required.
- There should be no gaps between the net and any adjacent structures greater than 250 mm.

Rescue plan

It is important to have a rescue plan in place when working with safety nets. The site supervisor is responsible for communicating the rescue plan to all workers and rescue equipment must always be kept on site.

Inspection, repair, and maintenance

Safety nets must be visually inspected regularly by a competent person and the records of all inspections must be kept on site. Inspections should check for:

- incorrect installation

- cuts/nicks/abrasions in mesh
- damage to stitching
- damaged or deformed fittings
- defects in knots (if knotted mesh).

Nets must be repaired by a competent person in a controlled environment.

Nets must be stored in dry conditions. They must be protected from UV, heat sources, and hazardous or damaging substances (solvents, oils, etc.)

Key takeaways:

- *Safety nets are classified based on energy absorption capacity and mesh size.*
- *All workers should be involved in the installation process so that they are made aware of any potential hazards.*
- *All workers should be made aware of the rescue plan.*
- *Report any damage of a safety net to a supervisor.*
- *Do not use damaged safety nets.*

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