

What is Leading Edge work?

Most contractors, even those not actively working at heights, are familiar with the term, but if you're not, let's start with basic definitions.

Leading Edge

Leading Edge work can occur on any jobsite across multiple trades where you are working at heights. Typically the worker is anchored from behind, at foot-level, and is exposed to an unprotected edge where the risk of a fall exists.

Sharp Edge

Sharp Edge work refers to a work environment where the lifeline comes in contact with a sharp or abrasive edge - with the potential to fray or sever most standard lifelines. A Sharp Edge may, or may not, also be a Leading Edge. The term "Sharp Edge" goes beyond obvious metal edges like corrugated sheeting or metal grinders. The definition includes *any* abrasive material. Think about how rough a precast concrete beam is. When a rope or cable slides across an abrasive edge with the combined weight of a worker and the dynamic force of a fall those cables and ropes can break, offering no protection.

We love these awesome "SRL Do's and Don'ts" from Guardian.

DO's & DON'Ts

DO

INSPECT YOUR SRL BEFORE EACH USE
Extend the lifeline and let it retract fully to make sure it's coast-and-operate smoothly. Test the braking mechanism.

DON'T

DON'T JUST GRAB 'N' GO
Remember it's called a lifeline for a reason.

DO

KEEP YOUR SRL CLEAN
Prevent foreign objects, dirt, and debris from entering your SRL's housing.

DON'T

DON'T EXPOSE YOUR SRL TO HARSH CHEMICALS, IMPACTS, OR ABRASIVE MATERIALS

DO

USE A MANUFACTURER-APPROVED CABLE LIFELINE SRL WITH SHOCK ABSORBER LOCATED AT YOUR BACK FOR LEADING EDGE WORK

DON'T

DO NOT USE A WEB-BASED LIFELINE SRL WITHOUT SHOCK ABSORBER AT YOUR BACK FOR LEADING EDGE WORK

DO

KEEP YOUR SRL ABOVE YOUR DORSAL WHENEVER POSSIBLE
This eliminates the potential for free fall.

DON'T

DO NOT USE THE SRL SHOCK ABSORBER AS A HANDLE
This can potentially put the shock absorber component from its protective sheath.

DO

PREVENT YOUR SRL LIFELINE FROM CONTACTING SHARP OR ABRASIVE OBJECTS
DO NOT COME YOUR ANCHOR POINT

DON'T

DO NOT BEND YOUR LIFELINE OVER CORNERS
A kink can weaken the lifeline severely.

DO

ONLY HAVE ONE LEG OF YOUR DUAL-LEG SRL TIED OFF AT A TIME
Unless transferring between anchors.

DON'T

DO NOT ATTACH YOUR SRL TO ANYTHING OTHER THAN A COMPATIBLE ANCHOR CONNECTION

DO

WHEN USING AN SRL FOR FALL RESTRAINT
Ensure the length of the lifeline does not exceed distance to fall height.

DON'T

DO NOT CUT THE PLASTIC PROTECTIVE WRAP FROM ANY SHOCK ABSORBER
The plastic cover is there to protect the shock absorber from damage.

DO

USE A RESCUE/RETRIEVAL SRL FOR CONFINED SPACE OPERATIONS

DON'T

DON'T USE A RESCUE/RETRIEVAL SRL FOR HOISTING PERSONNEL OR MATERIALS
Use a correct technique.

DO

USE A TAG LINE ATTACHED TO SNAP HOOK FOR ACCESS TO OUT-OF-REACH SRL

DON'T

DON'T LEAVE SRL LIFELINES DEPLOYED FOR EXTENDED PERIODS OF TIME
This can happen to you. Don't become a victim on the job.

DO

FOLLOW A MANUAL FALL PROTECTION OR TWITTER/FACEBOOK FOR THE LATEST UPDATES ON FALL PROTECTION

DON'T

DON'T BE AFRAID TO CALL OR WRITE US TO CLEAR UP ANY CONFUSION
We can't wait for help.

DO AND FINALLY... **#BE SAFE UP THERE**

Testing, Regulation and Certification

In the states, ANSI (American National Standards Institute) leads the charge on comprehensive testing and certifications for SRLs, Anchors and Lifeline systems. They test lifeline performance and durability in Leading Edge as well as Sharp Edge applications. In Canada the testing and regulatory agency is the CSA (Canadian Standards Association).

Considering Clearance

When calculating your fall clearance, remember the numbers will change depending on where you are anchored. When anchored overhead, or at shoulder height the clearance required is less than when anchored at foot-level. Make sure to check your manufacturer's instructions - and be aware that foot-level clearance spec's will change from once product to another.

OSHA's 29 CFR Part 1926 Subpart M (fall protection), §1926.501(b)(1) states:

Unprotected sides and edges. Each employee on a walking/working surface (horizontal and vertical surface) with an unprotected side or edge which is 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above a lower level shall be protected from falling by the use of guardrail systems, safety net systems, or personal fall arrest systems.

Fall Distance

Leading edge work presents a couple additional risks that require using devices designed for LE. Most Leading Edge workers anchor at foot-level, so if a fall occurs they will fall farther than workers anchored at shoulder-height or overhead. A longer fall translates to more force and impact to the body during fall arrest. LE systems are designed to absorb this increase in force.

Swing Effect

It is also important to invest in a system that can withstand a sharp edge. This need is compounded by the potential of swinging. With leading edge and sharp edge work the lifeline must not only be strong enough to arrest the initial fall, but also weather the potential sawing effect that occurs from swinging against a rough or sharp surface. If a worker has fallen from a side angle they will swing. This swinging action across an abrasive or sharp edge can wear away materials not designed to withstand the abuse.

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FALL PROTECTION

For more information on SRLs click here:

LEARN MORE

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digging deeper

For more info on Leading Edge and Fall Protection check out these links:

[Leading Edge Products](#)

[Guardian's Leading Edge blog](#)

[OSHA: Controlled Access Zones and Leading Edge](#)

[OSHA: Safe distance from edge of roof](#)

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