

Working over safety nets or soft-landing systems

Reason	Using safety nets and soft-landing systems safely can save lives or minimise injury in the event of a fall.
Outline	This talk covers the use of safety nets and soft-landing systems, together with some requirements for installation and rescue.



Safety nets installed before roof works start

There are six methods of access currently recommended for rigging and de-rigging safety nets, which should be considered in the following order.

FASET recommended hierarchy for work at height	
1.	Rig/de-rig safety nets remotely (using remote attachment devices).
2.	Rig/de-rig using powered access (MEWPs).
3.	Rig/de-rig using ladders (recommended maximum height 4.5 m).
4.	FASET specialist rigger – employing industrial climbing access techniques.
5.	Rope access techniques – IRATA.
6.	Mobile access towers.

Site conditions often dictate that a combination of any or all of the above methods may be required.

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Safe use

1. These systems are known as collective fall protection measures and are preferred to the use of safety harnesses and lanyards as they offer protection to more than one person.
2. There are many different types of safety net and soft-landing system that can be selected to suit particular circumstances. They are not designed to prevent falls, but to minimise the risk of injury after a fall, of either people or materials.
3. Safety nets should only be installed by a competent net installer who holds a recognised qualification, such as the Fall arrest safety equipment training (FASET) Safety net rigger qualification.
4. Safety nets should be fitted as high as possible beneath the work area to minimise the distance of a fall. Clearance below the net should be in accordance with the manufacturer's information sheet.
5. A safety net must be tight enough to minimise sag when loaded.
6. In addition to pre-use and handover inspections, safety nets should be inspected and recorded on a weekly basis by a competent person to ensure they are still in a safe condition.
7. Safety net anchors must not be fixed to recently constructed walls or into blockwork walls.
8. Soft-landing systems are usually large bags that are filled with air via a pump, or a group of smaller, pre-packed bags (beanbags) with polystyrene chippings, clipped together by plastic clips.
9. If soft-landing systems are to be used on upper floors, ensure stairwells are covered and windows are guarded to prevent someone who falls from being projected elsewhere.
10. Ensure floors are clear of debris before soft-landing systems are installed.

Means of rescue

1. A rescue plan should be in place for all work above safety nets and soft-landing systems.
2. When safety nets and soft-landing systems are used, consider how someone will get out of the net if they fall.
3. If a person falls and is not injured they will often be able to climb out of the area, but if they are injured they may need to be rescued.
4. When using airbags it is possible to slowly reduce the air pressure to gain access without disturbing a casualty too much. With beanbags, which are a little more rigid, boarding could be used if it is readily available or the bags could be unclipped to allow access.

Inspection

1. Safety nets are individually tagged (identified) and have to be inspected weekly (as well as daily pre-use checks). The results of the inspection should be recorded.
2. Soft-landing systems should be subjected to daily, pre-use checks.
3. Any safety net or soft-landing system that has been subjected to a load (a fall of a person or materials) may have been deformed or displaced and should be inspected before use.
4. Sharp objects are also likely to cause cuts, which would weaken a net or deflate an airbag.



When should you check a safety net or soft-landing system?

When should a safety net be examined?

What is the best way to rescue an injured person from a safety net?