

## TRAINERS CORNER

# Hands-on learning must play big part in fall protection training, especially as newhires enter a busy industry

FALL PROTECTION IS serious business. Climbing at 90 ft off the water or 130 ft on the derrick over the drill floor is a tremendously dangerous situation. To ensure safety, everyone involved must be properly trained, said **Clint Honeycutt**, president of Baton Rouge, La.-based Safety Connection.

Every year, Safety Connection trains about 5,000 students either on-site or at its Baton Rouge facility. The 4,000-sq ft indoor training center is equipped with scaffolding towers and confined-space structures to provide students with hands-on experience in climbing and rescue techniques. The company's customers include major oil companies such as BP, Chevron, Conoco, ExxonMobil and Shell.

According to Mr Honeycutt, every employee who works at heights should receive a minimum 8 hours of fall protection training to learn to choose, inspect and hook up their equipment. On top of that, each rig crew needs at least 2 people who have completed a 2-day competent person training. "If the crew runs into a situation where they have to build a horizontal life-line across something and tie off to it for fall protection, they need someone with advanced training," he said.

It takes at least 2 days — one in the classroom and one hands-on — to train to a "competent person" level, he added. "A 2-hour video or online training course isn't going to cut it. You must have a knowledgeable instructor to answer questions, and hands-on is a must, especially for a competent person course." For example, Mr Honeycutt's class includes a fall protection demonstration to illustrate arresting forces are generated, using different types of lanyards.

"There's an old Chinese proverb: 'I hear, and I forget. I see, and I remember. I do, and I understand.' We have exercise structures at our training facility so the students can learn to climb in a safe environment and understand the experience," he said.



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This competent person course covers the fall protection hierarchy, the 4 parts of a fall arrest system (anchor, connecting means, body support and rescue), system inspection, standards summary, proper donning of a harness, proper use and maintenance of equipment, when and where equipment is needed, confined space mechanical systems, systems rescue and pre-job planning.

Mr Honeycutt also pointed out that rescue is critical in fall protection training,

yet it is often overlooked. "When something happens, they don't get the opportunity to call 9-1-1. It's important to have a rescue plan, to have someone who's been through rescue training and has the necessary equipment," he said.

When hiring a trainer, he advised, research the company's background and get references. "Don't just take their word that they've been doing this for 25 years. Check them out and talk to their previous customers."

Soon, Mr Honeycutt said, he hopes the industry adopts formal standards for fall protection training and trainers. He suggested that training include more time studying compatible connections and that trainers understand all types and brands of connectors and their compatibility.

"There's always been risk in the industry with falls on rigs, but now that the drilling activity level is so high and we have so many newhires coming in, the risks are even higher," Mr Honeycutt said. "We must make sure these workers aren't sent out to rigs without proper fall protection training. They deserve it to protect themselves and their families." ♦