

What you need to know about:

HARNESSES SUSPENSION

Working-at-Heights, in a harness, incurs the risk of being suspended, in the air, after a fall-arrest. This event is referred to as "**Harness Suspension**."

Harness Suspension is an emergency situation; it can cause the person to faint and/or die. **Workers suspended by their harness should be rescued as quickly as possible. They should then be laid on their back in a horizontal position.**

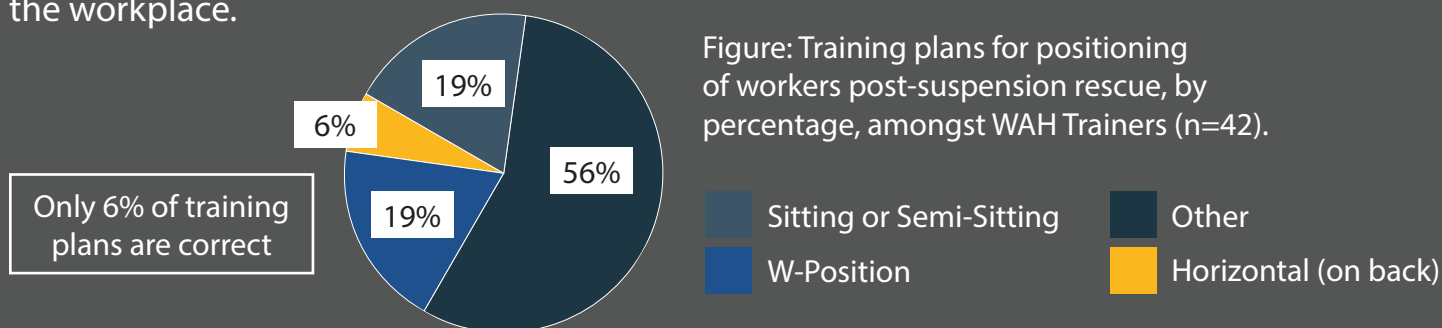


People mistakenly call situations like this '**Suspension Trauma**.' However, '**Suspension Trauma**' *does not exist* as an injury outcome in the scientific literature; and in fact, *there are no documented cases* of '**Suspension Trauma**' in the industrial sector. This has been confirmed through literature review and in consultation with Working-At-Heights (WAH) training providers.

Workers and trainers have been incorrectly told that to treat '**Suspension Trauma**,' the suspended worker must never be laid down after being rescued. They have been incorrectly told that the worker should be positioned with the upper body raised, in a seated or possibly squatting or crouched posture. This treatment plan is incorrect.

Medical experts agree that all **Harness Suspension** patients should be treated the same way as any other patient suffering from fainting: they should be laid on their back in a horizontal position.¹ This allows blood to more easily flow back to the brain.

Communication about **Harness Suspension** to the larger community remains inaccurate. Despite international consensus on the management of a **Harness Suspension** by a review panel comprised of clinical professionals in the field, key regulatory bodies in the United States and Canada have retained outdated messaging regarding this topic. This discrepancy may also contribute to the lack of documented incidences of **Harness Suspension** events in the workplace.



Recommendations

1. Everyone stops using the term '**Suspension Trauma**';
2. Trainers revise their **Harness Suspension** management plans;
3. The MLTSD provides clear guidance on managing **Harness Suspension**; and
4. The WSIB and workplaces collect data specific to the occurrence and outcomes of **Harness Suspension**.

For **CROSH**'s full report visit: crosh.ca/resources/harness-suspension or request it from croshtech@laurentian.

1. Adisesh et al, 2009. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrpdf/rr708.pdf>