



SAFETY ASSESSMENT
FEDERATION

Guidance

For the inspection and Thorough Examination of Personal Fall Protection Systems

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Important Note

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to support the periodic inspection and/or Thorough Examination of Personal Fall Protection Systems with respect to BS 7883 - *Personal fall protection equipment, Anchor systems - System design, installation and inspection - Code of practice* to ensure they are safe for the end user.

This document assists the Competent Person in applying a risk-based approach and aims to promote the safety of the associated equipment whilst providing consistency for Duty Holders.

1. Scope

This document provides guidance primarily for the Competent Person and the Duty Holder on the inspection and Thorough Examination of Personal Fall Protection Systems. It aims to promote an understanding of BS 7883 - *Personal fall protection equipment, Anchor systems - System design, installation and inspection - Code of practice*, and to drive consistency of inspections and Thorough Examinations of these systems.

Both the Competent Person and the Duty Holder must collaborate to ensure that meaningful inspections and Thorough Examinations of anchor systems are carried out. Therefore, this guidance is intended for use by both parties.

BS 7883 defines five types of equipment. However, this document focuses on system types A, C, and D, as their safety depends on their connection to or within base materials. These system types are detailed in [Table 1](#).

The document also supports a risk-based approach to inspections and Thorough Examinations, particularly in cases where a technical file is missing or incomplete.

This guidance does not apply to anchor points integrated into equipment (e.g., a MEWP anchor point), as these are considered part of the equipment's original design. However, if equipment is modified to include an anchor system (for example, a Type C fall arrest system fitted to an overhead travelling crane bridge), then this guidance may apply, and the anchor system may fall within the scope of BS 7883.

2. Definitions

- **Competent Person** - Somebody who has knowledge and practical experience to perform inspections or Thorough Examination of Personal Fall Protection Systems. Within this document, such an individual will be represented with a capital C and capital P, thus, the Competent Person.
- **Duty Holder** - Person or organisation with the responsibility for the overall standard and quality of the anchor system.
- **Examination Scheme** - A document created by the PFPS system designer and retained within a technical file which details inspection and Thorough Examination procedures, frequencies and criteria which should include manufacturer recommendations, for verifying system integrity throughout its design life. Examination scheme in this context must not be confused with an examination scheme under The Lifting Operations and the Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998.
- **PFPS** - Personal Fall Protection Systems.
- **System Designer** - A person responsible for ensuring the PFPS is safely designed and installed, and that it is suitable for the intended application.
- **Technical file** - Documentation which supports the PFPS, compiled by the system designer and passed to the duty holder following commissioning of the system. The technical file should be made available for all interested parties, including the Competent Person.

3. Types of Systems

Table 1 – Types of systems

<p>Type A</p>	<p>Permanently fixed anchor systems incorporating one or more structural anchors, such as an eyebolt and include deviation points, anchor posts and davits (including their sockets).</p> 
<p>Type C</p>	<p>Structurally anchored Anchor Systems, incorporating a flexible anchor line such as wire rope to $\leq 15^\circ$ from horizontal.</p> 
<p>Type D</p>	<p>Structurally anchored Anchor Systems incorporating a rigid rail or tube to $\leq 15^\circ$ from horizontal.</p> 

Note: BS 7883 does not include Vertical Anchor Systems but may do so in the future; therefore, it can be considered good practice to follow this guidance.

4. Situation

BS 7883, as a Code of Practice provides guidance and recommendations for system designers, installers, inspectors, Duty Holders, rescuers and users of anchor systems for fall protection. Unlike most standards, including previous editions of BS 7883, the latest version applies retrospectively to systems installed prior to its publication in November 2019.

This revision represents a significant change from the 2005 edition. One key change was the assignment of specific responsibilities to system designers, including the requirement to compile a technical file for the anchor system and to provide it to the Duty Holder upon completion. This technical file serves as a comprehensive record of the system's design, installation, and inspection, and is intended for use by all relevant parties, including the Competent Person.

However, challenges arise when appropriate technical information, particularly for systems with hidden elements is unavailable for review during inspections or Thorough Examinations. Many systems installed before 2019 lack the documentation now required under BS 7883. Some new systems continue to be handed over to Duty Holders without the necessary information. Compliance difficulties were further compounded by the timing of the standard's release, which occurred shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, inspection bodies have adopted varied approaches to its implementation.

5. Competence and Working at Height

Inspections and Thorough Examinations of PFPS should be carried out by competent persons, defined as those suitably trained or qualified by knowledge and practical experience to perform the required tasks.

Inspection and Thorough Examination of PFPS, in most cases, will involve the Competent Person working at height. This must only be undertaken when it is safe to do so, and attention is drawn to Regulation 6 of the Work at Height Regulations 2005 and HSE INDG401 *Working at Height - A brief guide*. The hierarchy is as follows:

1. **Avoid**
For example, using extendable tools, relocating equipment to a position where work at height can be avoided.
2. **Prevent (collective)**
For example, installing fixed guard rails around roof edges, use of a Mobile Elevating Work Platform or a Building Maintenance Unit.
3. **Prevent (personal)**
For example, the use of a personal work restraint system to prevent reaching hazardous areas.
4. **Minimise (collective)**
For example, the application of soft-landing systems, such as netting beneath work areas.
5. **Minimise (personal)**
For example, the use of a personal fall arrest system.

6. Defect Categorisation

BS 7883 utilises defect categorisation terms: 'Conditional Fail' and 'Conditional Pass', in addition to 'Pass' and 'Fail'. SAFed members are not expected to adjust their existing longstanding and widely understood defect categorisation methodologies, which differ from the approach noted in BS 7883.

The Competent Person must review the information associated with a PFPS system prior to its inspection or Thorough Examination. This can include maintenance and third-party inspection reports, particularly if they are required to connect to the system during its inspection or Thorough Examination.

The Competent Person may encounter systems reported or labelled with 'Conditional Fail' by a third-party. This may not automatically preclude an inspection or Thorough Examination from being undertaken. Where the Competent Person is required to connect to the system during its inspection or Thorough Examination, they must understand the reasons 'Conditional Fail' has been applied, to ensure their own safety. This could be due to a lack of technical information; however, if a third party reports deterioration or other faults, the Competent Person must determine if it is safe to proceed with an inspection or Thorough Examination.

SAFed inspection bodies carry out inspections and Thorough Examinations of PFPS in accordance with the Work at Height Regulations and the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (where applicable), typically utilising a defect categorisation system as shown in Table 2. Table 3 shows how SAFed members commonly adopted defect categorisations translate to the defect methodology suggested within BS 7883.

There may be conflicts between reports from the Competent Person and those from a third-party/maintainer. Such discrepancies are not unique to inspections and Thorough Examinations of PFPS. Therefore, if the Duty Holder encounters conflicting reports issued by multiple parties, the details of each must be fully understood by the Duty Holder, and it remains their responsibility to assess reported findings and take action on these as required.

Table 2 – Typical defect categories utilised by SAFed members

Defect Status/Category	Description
<p style="text-align: center;">A Immediate or timed</p>	<p>Any defect which in the Competent Person's opinion is, or could become a danger to persons. Remedial action is required to rectify those defects within a time period or before further use.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">B and C Other defects, observations or recommendations</p>	<p>Other defects which require attention, or recommendations relating to improvements. Remedial action is at the discretion of the Duty Holder after assessing the risks.</p>

Table 3 –

BS 7883 defect reporting methodology and comparison to SAFed member defect categorisation

Status	BS 7883 definitions	Typical SAFed member report entry
Pass	Satisfies all relevant recommendations and therefore can remain in service and should be labelled as remaining in service.	No comments on report and/or status 'ok'
Conditional Pass	<p>Categories of inspection results on anchor systems conforming to BS 7883:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not represent an immediate safety concern and should be labelled as remaining in service. An inspection report should be issued to the Duty Holder as soon as possible with recommendations for remedial works to be carried out to improve the anchor system and/or documentation within an appropriate timescale. <p>Categories of inspection results on anchor systems not conforming to BS 7883:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfies the recommendations of a previous standard or code of practice but does not meet all current recommendations in accordance with this British Standard, but does not represent an immediate safety concern and should be labelled as remaining in service. An inspection report should be issued to the Duty Holder as soon as possible with recommendations for remedial works to be carried out to improve the anchor system and/or documentation within an appropriate timescale. 	<p>B and C Other defects, observations or recommendations</p>

Table 3 –
BS 7883 defect reporting methodology and comparison to SAFed member defect categorisation.
(continued)

Status	BS 7883 definitions	Typical SAFed member report example
Conditional Fail	<p>Categories of inspection results on anchor systems conforming to BS 7883:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Represents an immediate safety concern which is capable of improvement. The anchor system and/or Personal Fall Protection Equipment (PFPE) should be labelled as taken out of service, e.g. “DO NOT USE”, and, where possible, decommissioned to prevent use. An inspection report should be issued to the Duty Holder as soon as possible with requirements for remedial works that are to be carried out before the anchor system is re-inspected and returned to service. <p>Categories of inspection results on anchor systems not conforming to BS 7883:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfies the recommendations of a previous standard or code of practice but does not meet all current recommendations in accordance with this British Standard but does not represent an immediate safety concern which is capable of improvement. The anchor system and/or PFPE should be labelled as taken out of service, e.g. DO NOT USE, and, where possible, decommissioned to prevent use. An inspection report should be issued to the Duty Holder as soon as possible with requirements for remedial works that are to be carried out before the anchor system is re-inspected and returned to service. 	<p>The Competent Person to evaluate the concern, after which the defect could be:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Immediate or timed</p> <p style="text-align: center;">B or C</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Other defects, observations or recommendations</p>

Table 3 –
BS 7883 defect reporting methodology and comparison to SAFed member defect categorisation.
(continued)

Status	BS 7883 definitions	Typical SAFed member report example
Fail	<p>Categories of inspection results on anchor systems conforming to BS 7883:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents an immediate safety concern which is beyond repair/improvement and should be labelled as taken out of service, e.g. DO NOT USE, and, where possible, decommissioned to prevent use. <p>Categories of inspection results on anchor systems not conforming to BS 7883:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not satisfy the recommendations of a previous standard or code of practice and does not meet the recommendations in accordance with this British Standard and represents an immediate safety concern which is beyond repair/improvement and should be labelled as taken out of service, e.g. “DO NOT USE”, and, where possible, decommissioned to prevent use. 	<p>A Immediate <i>or</i> Unable to inspect due to missing documentation</p>

7. Documentation Requirements

The Competent Person should request and review applicable and/or suitable documentation associated with the PFPS to satisfy inspection and Thorough Examination requirements in accordance with BS 7883. This should be requested from the Duty Holder prior to the Competent Person's site visit. Systems installed to the latest revision of BS 7883 should have a technical file, an operation and maintenance manual, and an examination scheme. The Competent Person should review information that supports the system's installation prior to their inspection or Thorough Examination and follow the examination scheme (if provided), alongside their company's procedures and guidance.

Adequate review of a system's technical information is required before the Competent Person's first inspection or Thorough Examination. Thereafter, it may be suitable only to review the technical file to clarify information and understand recent entries or outcomes of third-party visits, such as maintenance reports.

7.1 Examination Scheme

For the purpose of this document and the interpretation within BS 7883, the Competent Person (and maintainer) should use examination schemes where provided in conjunction with their organisations procedures.

If the Examination Scheme prescribes any form of testing, the Competent Person should be aware of this, and request documentary evidence where required. If the testing has not been carried out, this should be brought to the Duty Holder's attention. The maintainer usually carries out such testing.

If the Examination Scheme prescribes any form of uncovering or excavation, the Competent Person should be aware of this, and request documentary evidence where required. If the testing has not been carried out, this should be brought to the Duty Holder's attention. The maintainer usually carries out such uncovering or excavation.

If the Examination Scheme prescribes any form of NDT, the Competent Person should be aware of this, and request documentary evidence where required. If the NDT has not been carried out, this should be brought to the Duty Holder's attention. The maintainer usually carries out such testing.

7.2 Collation of information

[Appendix 1](#) is provided to assist collation of information. The Duty Holder should complete this prior to the Competent Person's site visit. The Competent Person should then use the completed appendix and verify relevant information to support their inspection/Thorough Examination. Subsequent updates are not required unless changes occur to the system, or if additional information is acquired.

7.3 Missing information

Where information is absent or not known, the Competent Person should evaluate the risk that is presented due to that missing information, considering the type of system and its application. Missing information may:

- Prevent an inspection and thorough examination from being undertaken, where this relates to the safety of the installation.
- Not prevent an inspection and thorough examination from being undertaken, but where information is missing, this should be brought to the attention of the Duty Holder.

8. New Installations

New systems are expected to comply fully with the latest revision of BS 7883. The system designer is responsible for creating the technical file, which must be provided to the Duty Holder upon completion of the system's installation, in accordance with BS 7883. A technical file for a new system should include:

- Preliminary information (e.g. details of expected tasks and project details).
- Companies involved and relationships (e.g. Duty Holders, system designers, manufacturers and installers).
- Design considerations (e.g. rescue plans, design life and structural suitability, which could be confirmed by reference to drawings or on-site investigation).
- Application (work restraint, fall arrest, rope access, work positioning, rescue, evacuation).
- System design specification (e.g. site details, layout drawings, types, required personal fall protection equipment, materials used, fixing details).
- Documentation for traceability of products and items (e.g. declarations of conformity, serial numbers and batch numbers).
- Sign off documents provided by the installer, inspector and Duty Holder.
- Where elements of the anchor system are hidden, (e.g. by roof coverings or cladding, details of all hidden elements, and the method of fixing, documentation confirming this, including photographs).
- O&M manual.
- Examination scheme.

9 Existing Systems

For existing systems (pre-2019 or already inspected by the Competent Person), the absence of some technical information may not preclude inspection or Thorough Examination. In such cases, the available documentation should be requested and reviewed by the Competent Person. This should be understood to allow the Competent Person to assess the risk and therefore adopt a risk-based approach. Considerations may include, but are not limited to:

- System application.
- Method of connection to base material (e.g. through fixed or structural).
- If there are any hidden elements.
- The varying significance of absent information/documentation for the given installation.
- Age of the system and its design life.
- Maintenance and inspection history (knowledge of the system by the Competent Person)

The rationale for existing systems 'already inspected by the Competent Person' is based upon report history and knowledge of the system by the Competent Person and recognises time taken to align with BS 7883. The year/standard to which the system has been installed to should be known. Existing systems may be those installed post November 2019..

However, certain information must be known for inspections and Thorough Examinations to be completed, especially for systems which are used for fall arrest, rope access, work positioning, rescue, and evacuation.

The following examples provide scenarios for the aforementioned risk-based approach. All of the examples noted below are dependent on a review of the particular system by the Competent Person.

9.1 Example Systems

Existing system example 1: A Type A through-fixed anchor point situated within structurally sound steel, where all components are visible. The Duty Holder can only source limited technical information. This presents an example where it is likely an inspection or Thorough Examination can be carried out, with the limited technical information-

Existing system example 2: A Type A structural anchor point situated within concrete used for fall arrest. The Duty Holder can only source limited technical information. This presents an example where it is unlikely an inspection can be carried out with the limited technical information.

Existing system example 3: A Type A davit socket with hidden elements. The method of structural connection is not known. This presents an example where it is unlikely that an inspection or Thorough Examination can be carried out without sufficient technical information.

Existing system example 4: A Type C flexible anchor line used for fall arrest is mounted to sheet roof coverings, allowing all components to be visible. The Duty Holder is unable to source technical information. This presents an example where it is unlikely that an inspection can be carried out without sufficient technical information.

Existing system example 5: A Type C flexible anchor line with more than two anchor posts used for work restraint is mounted to the roof coverings, allowing all components to be visible. The Duty Holder can only source limited technical information. This presents an example where it is likely an inspection can be carried out with the limited technical information.

10. Hidden Elements

Systems may include elements that are covered post-installation. This involves investigating a sample of components connected to building steelwork and covered by roof waterproofing materials. The Competent Person must consider hidden elements during inspections and Thorough Examinations. The method of structural connection should be known, and the equipment must be safe for use.

Information required to support inspections and Thorough Examinations of systems which contain hidden elements is provided in Section 2 of Appendix 1. As with Section 1 of Appendix 1, Duty Holders should complete this before the Competent Person's site visit. The Competent Person should then use the completed appendix and verify relevant information to support their inspection/Thorough Examination.

If information relating to hidden elements is unknown, the system can be reverse-engineered using Annex J of BS 7883. This involves investigating a sample of each type by accessing hidden elements (typically 5%, with a minimum of three). Photographs should be taken during this process, with documentation provided to the Duty Holder for inclusion in the technical file. Documentation should include information detailed in [Section 2 of Appendix 1](#).

11. Load/Pull Testing

Periodic load testing requirements are detailed in [Appendix 2](#). It is noted that proof load tests may not validate the structural strength and stability of load-bearing structures, and load testing may not replace technical documentation omissions.

12. Conclusion

This guidance serves as a practical and technical reference to support consistent, safe, and informed inspections and Thorough Examinations of personal fall protection systems. It allows a risk-based approach when systems are provided with incomplete technical files and reinforces the importance of technical competence. Appendices provide structured tools for gathering information and making decisions regarding inspections and Thorough Examinations for both new and existing systems.

Appendix 1 – Section 1 - PFPS information sheet (Types A, C and D)

Section 1 – To be completed by the Duty Holder

Description	Details	Reference/location of supporting information (e.g. file name or page)
1. Serial number(s)		
2. System type, description and year of installation <i>e.g. Type A Davit Socket, 2023</i>		
3. Application <i>e.g. Restraint, fall arrest, rope access, work positioning, rescue, evacuation</i>		
4. Number of users		
5. System rating <i>e.g. SRmax (system rating), RMmax (rated mass), WLL, SWL</i>		
6. Method of fixing <i>e.g. Through fixed, resin, expanding socket, welded, bolted, etc.</i>		
7. Design/structural details <i>Design considerations/calculations which include evaluation of structural connections</i>		
8. Installation/sign off documentation <i>Does this confirm that the installation was carried out in accordance with the design?</i>		
9. Pull/load test documentation, including date of last pull/load test (if applicable, see Appendix 2)		
10. Does the system contain hidden elements? If yes, complete Section 2 below		
11. O&M manual		
12. System Component Certificate <i>As issued by the manufacturer of the equipment.</i>		
13. LOLER 9(2) report of Thorough Examination (if applicable) and/or post installation inspection report		
14. Examination scheme		

Certification of the person collating information: _____

Name: _____ **Signature:** _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix 1 – Section 2 - PFPS information sheet (Types A, C and D) - Hidden Elements

Section 2 – Use where hidden elements are present

Description	Details	Reference/location of supporting information (e.g. file name or page)
15. Drawings		
16. Method of fixing <i>e.g. welded to structural steel, cast in, mechanically fixed</i>		
17. Locking of mechanical fixings (if applicable) <i>e.g. Fixings which could loosen with time should be prevented from losing torque</i>		
18. Construction materials <i>e.g. stainless-steel cast in</i>		
19. Installation photographs		
20. Design life		
21. Date of next uncovered inspection (if required)		

Certification of the person collating information: _____

Name: _____ **Signature:** _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix 2 – Load testing requirements

The table below, taken from BS 7883, is used to confirm which systems require periodic load testing. ([refer to section 7](#))

	Examples of anchor systems	Proof load test
Type A	Eyebolt or socket with single structural anchor, resin/expansion/weld-fixed	Yes
	Eyebolt or socket through-fixed, fixings accessible.	No
	Eyebolt or socket through-fixed, fixings not accessible	Yes
	Paired anchor device with more than one structural anchor, resin/ expansion/weld-fixed	Yes
	Paired anchor device with more than one structural anchor, through-fixed, fixings accessible.	No
	Paired anchor device with more than one structural anchor, through-fixed, fixings not accessible.	Yes
	Rigid anchor post with resin/ expansion/weld-fixed structural anchors	Yes
	Rigid anchor post clamped/ through-fixed, fixings accessible	No
	Rigid anchor post clamped/ through-fixed, fixings not accessible	Yes
	Load-limiting anchor devices	Refer to the manufacturer
	Davit arm/davit base with resin/ expansion/weld-fixed structural anchors	Yes
	Davit arm/davit base clamped/ through-fixed, fixings accessible	Yes
Davit arm/davit base clamped/ through-fixed, fixings not accessible	Yes	
Type C	Load-limiting anchor devices as part of a horizontal flexible anchor line	Refer to the manufacturer
Type D	Horizontal rigid anchor line with resin/expansion/weld-fixed structural anchors	Yes
	Horizontal rigid anchor line clamped/through-fixed, fixings accessible	Yes
	Horizontal rigid anchor line clamped/through-fixed, fixings not accessible	Yes

Note 1: System designers and manufacturers may specify 6-monthly periodic load testing intervals in the examination schemes or technical files, particularly rope access, work positioning, rescue, and evacuation systems. These recommendations should be followed as part of the Competent Person's inspection protocol.

Note 2: Type B and Type E systems (removable/temporary) are omitted from Appendix 2 as this document focuses on system Types A, C and D (permanent structural anchors).