



Proactive Safety, Lessons Learned ***The Santa Clause Method:***

a brief study of the practice of list making and the subsequent checking of that list | rope safety, LIFElines!

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"All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." Edmund Burke

Imagine yourself 250 feet above the ground. The only thing between you and the eventuality of gravity is a suspended scaffold hanging by wire ropes tied to a balancing mechanism using metal counterweights. You know, like in the medieval times. Now imagine that if that scaffold fails, the only thing keeping you from plummeting to certain death is a harness tied to a rope tied to the roof.

Welcome to everyday life for the average building skin contractor in construction.

Ok, ok, that sounds dramatic. Let's put it in context.

We certainly all do dangerous things every day. Pump our own gas. Drive on interstates. Watch the Kardashians. But one thing most of us will never have the sincere pleasure of doing is rigging our own lifelines. (And yes, that is what they are actually called.) Let's run through a short list of questions you will need to ask yourself prior to undertaking this important piece of preventing certain death.

1. Did you make the list? There is an extensive list of inspection and rigging items that needs to be followed prior to actually hanging from the side of the building. If you don't have one, then ask your supervisor. If he doesn't have one, then call me and we'll set up an interview.
2. Did you check that list again after lunch? Who knows who was touching your stuff while you were busy chowing down on your Snack Pack. Get up there and check it again before you trust your life to chance.
3. Do you inspect your rope every day before you hooked on? "Wait, I need to inspect my rope every day?" This little nugget is now the 5 minutes traffic of our stage.

When it comes to rope inspection, manufacturers take no liability. Controlling contractors take no liability. Even your employer takes no liability. It is up to you. Your lifeline is your rope is your responsibility. Inspect it and then inspect it again. And then store it properly away from chemicals that could damage it, away from UV that could degrade it, away from water that could shrink it.

What rope are you using? If it's a static line (which it should be) then water is your mortal enemy. Any wet rope must dry away from direct sunlight or it is no longer fit for use. Don't use that one.

How long have you been using the rope? Has it been excessively used? Rope service life can be from 3 months to 5 years depending on the type and frequency of use. So inspect it, and if you have a question ask it. And if nobody answers it, then don't use your rope. Are you detecting a theme here?

Did you check your list again? Probably time to get that out and take another look. Are there any sharp edges on the parapet or the exterior façade? If so, are you guarding your rope from exposure to a certain cut and your best and last Wile E. Coyote impression? (Hint: you won't live to chase that dastardly bird after your fall)

Did your manager tell you a replacement rope is too expensive? If yes, then call me and I'll set you up for an interview. If no, then tell him go buy another rope! Don't use the one in your hand while you wait either. The last thing that should stand between you and seeing your kids again is a couple hundred bucks.

Did you inspect your rigging again? Get up there and make sure all is well. Joe Welder might be up there with his torch he nicknamed "The Widow Maker" drumming up sparks and burning your salvation away thread by thread.

Get a list. Print your list. Keep your list. Put it on your phone. Check your list. Check it again. Then, you guessed it, check it again. Oh, and if you ever decide to get complacent when it comes to your own life remember the lesson Tommy Lee Jones taught Will Smith on that park bench, "A person is smart. People are dumb, panicky dangerous animals and you know it. Fifteen hundred years ago everybody knew the Earth was the center of the universe. Five hundred years ago, everybody knew the Earth was flat."

Be smart. Take safety into your own hands, and then hold on for dear life. It's all you have.

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