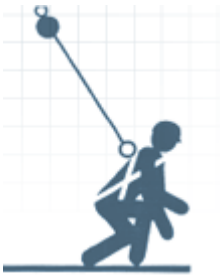

WESTERN NEW ENGLAND COLLEGE

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SAFETY COMPLIANCE

SUSPENSION TRAUMA, Treating The Victim:

While suspended:
Encourage the victim to "pump" his/her legs frequently.

If available help the victim identify foot-holds on nearby objects to alleviate pressure.

Once lowered:
Try to keep the victim up-right if possible. Lower him/her until they can stand firmly enough to have the harness removed but not all the way to the ground.

If the victim is unconscious:
They can be sat on the ground with their upper body raised.

Keep victim air way open. Standard trauma resuscitation should be used if necessary.

After the rescue – regardless of how good the victim may feel:

Transport the victim to Health Service. A professional health-care evaluation is a must to monitor for potential delayed effects.

Why?

The mandatory safety harness (fall arrest system) is designed to stop a falling High Lift operator before he or she hits the ground. The shock absorption built into the harness dampens this stopping motion to prevent whiplash type injuries. Usually the worker will become suspended just below the work platform. Other injuries may occur from striking nearby objects during the brief fall or swinging side to side afterward.

SUSPENSION TRAUMA: Although the harness saves the worker from impacting the ground, he/she is then left suspended in midair rarely with an opportunity for self-rescue. Rescue will have to be accomplished by someone else, in most cases co-workers or first responders on the ground. During the time this takes the weight of the suspended worker causes the harness to severely constrict circulation. This constriction, with the legs below the heart, causes "venous pooling" in the legs. Less blood is circulated elsewhere in the body and the blood trapped in the legs becomes "deoxygenated." Releasing this blood abruptly can lead to cardiac arrest or kidney failure. Research published by the US Occupational Health and Safety Administration indicates that suspension in a fall arrest device can result in unconsciousness, followed by death in less than 30 minutes. Also, the training program used at the College notes that suspension for as little as 15 minutes can cause permanent injuries or delayed death.