

“Our Work Shows Pride, With Safety As Our Guide”

Points to Ponder—Three Points to be Exact

In many of the jobs that we have, we are required to perform some climbing. From entering concrete trucks to servicing plant and equipment, many of us must climb on something everyday. The first rule of climbing is “three points of contact”. Three points of contact means having two feet and one hand or two hands and one foot solidly engaged while climbing. The idea is to prevent slips and falls. Slips and falls are a cause of many of our employee injuries.

How many of you actually think that you practice good climbing techniques and always maintain three good points of contact? If you don't think about maintaining three points of contact, you probably are not. I have found that even when concentrating on maintaining three points of contact I fail to do so, and I have honestly tried this in an effort to learn how we can improve on our safety record.

What can we do to improve? I think the answer is practice. I think that people believe that they are performing good climbing techniques because they have been taught the three-point rule and most of the time climbing maneuvers are made without incident. It is nearly impossible to observe flaws in climbing maneuvers because people move too quickly. Terry Jones video taped a driver climbing on his concrete truck a few years ago and there were numerous times when there were only two points of contact. But, you had to slow the video down to catch the failures.

We all learned to climb long before we came to work or had any formal training

on climbing with the three-point rule. As practiced climbers we developed a method of climbing that did not require much thought. It is very similar to walking. Observe someone walking. They swing their arms in time with their stride. It becomes more pronounced as they move more quickly. The arm swing helps to maintain balance. Someone who walks with their hands in their pockets or while carrying something, walks more slowly and deliberately in an effort to maintain balance. When carrying an object under just one arm the swing of the free arm is more pronounced to help to maintain balance. It is our practiced nature to try to maintain a rhythm even if it is not necessarily the safest method.

Here is where our failures show up – we developed a rhythm. Whether it is climbing or walking, our past practice is where we are comfortable. The next time you climb a ladder, pay close attention to your technique. Try to stop in mid motion. I think you will find that you are moving a hand and a foot simultaneously. That is the practiced rhythm of ascending or descending that results in the quickest movement up or down. The three point rule is being broken when this occurs.

Now try to move just one hand or one foot at a time. Most people find this to be awkward. You need to practice the one hand and one foot technique for some time before a new rhythm will be developed. Even if the mind is willing to apply the new technique, the body is often difficult to convince. It takes lots of practice to unlearn the old technique.

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For What It Is Worth! *On The Lighter Side—Ads seen in the newspaper*

- Lost: small apricot poodle. Reward. Neutered. Like one of the family.
- A superb and inexpensive restaurant. Fine food expertly served by waitresses in appetizing forms.
- Four-poster bed, 101 years old. Perfect for antique lover.
- For Sale: Beautiful desk suitable for lady with thick legs and large drawers.
- Dinner Specials: Turkey \$3.35; Chicken or Beef \$3.25; Children, \$2.00.
- Wanted: 50 girls for stripping machine operators in factory.
- Expert laundry: We do not tear your clothing with machinery. We do it carefully by hand.

