



## **Suspension Trauma vs Syncope**

Following research conducted by the HSE we need to change the way we describe unconsciousness caused by suspension in a harness.

"Trauma" refers to an injury, where the cause of unconsciousness in fallen people is either restriction of blood flow via pressure from the harness, causing a pooling of blood in the legs, or naturally poor circulation resulting in the same outcome.

The use of Relief Straps therefore allows the release of pressure, and the movement of the legs, thus increasing natural blood flow.

### **Change in terminology**

Suspension Trauma is not the correct terminology for the resultant unconsciousness following a fall. The correct terminology is "Suspension Syncope". This is pronounced "Sink – o – pee"

### **Revised First Aid Guidance**

#### NOTE: -

First Aid advice should never be given by a non-trained person. Advice should always be sought from a trained First Aider and procedures written and followed for the specific company.

It is now believed that placing a patient in a sitting or semi-recumbent position is more dangerous as it is increasing the length of time the brain is without oxygenated blood, more dangerous than the potential toxin influx from pooled blood.

Remember that the most common sufferers of this type of unconsciousness are the military when on parade or sentry duty. Soldiers on sentry are provided with boots larger than their size to allow them to move their feet, and they continuously tense leg muscles, increasing blood flow through the leg area. Those who do not do this faint, but are immediately conscious once horizontal as blood re-enters the brain.

#### General Advice: -

When providing first aid to a casualty who following an arrested fall has been suspended in their harness:

- No change should be made to the standard first aid guidance for the post recovery of a semi-conscious or unconscious person in a horizontal position (recovery position), even if the subject of prior harness suspension.
- No change should be made to the standard first aid guidance of ABC management (airway, breathing and cardio-pulmonary resuscitation), even if the subject of prior harness suspension.
- First responders to persons in harness suspension should be able to recognise the symptoms of pre-syncope. These include light headedness; nausea; sensations of flushing; tingling or numbness of the arms or legs; anxiety; visual disturbance; or a feeling they are about to faint.