

Tensioned Lines: Clear the Release Path

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Why this matters

A pulling line can release energy through a broken connection, shifting anchor or sudden load movement. The hazard extends beyond the line's visible position.

Objective: Confirm the pulling arrangement and protected positions before applying tension.

Key hazards or failure points

Failed lines or connections; moving anchors; trapped hands; loops tightening; unexpected load movement; lost communication.

Practical controls

- Use the task-specific pulling plan and manufacturer instructions. Have the responsible technical person establish equipment, connections, anchorage and permitted loading.
- Identify the potential movement and release areas for this arrangement. Keep people outside them; never stand inside a loop or straddle a tensioned line.
- Inspect the actual line and accessories using their applicable criteria. Agree communication, stop response and controlled release before tension is applied.

Verify It in the Field

With tension safely absent, match equipment identifiers, connections and configuration to the plan. Required inspectors resolve damage or missing capacity information.

From safe positions, compare barriers and assigned work locations with the assessed release path. Include direction changes, anchors and access by other crews.

Confirm communication without operating the pull. Identify who verifies safe release before anyone approaches a snag or adjusts a connection.

Stop and reassess

Stop for a snag, slipping connection, anchor movement, damaged line, lost signal or person entering danger. Stay clear until authorized personnel control and verify the energy state.

Ask the crew

1. Where could this system move if it releases?
2. What supports this anchor and connection choice?
3. Who verifies safe access after a stop?

Use this HOP tool — Job-site review: Before tension is applied, compare the actual line route with the briefed arrangement from outside the danger area. Identify one changed anchor, corner or access point. Ask who must reassess its effect and what evidence is needed before the pull begins.

Sources: OSHA 1926.251, 1910.184, 1926.964; DOE Vol. 2, pp. 8–9. HOP concepts adapted from DOE-HDBK-1028-2009, Vol. 2 (June 2009). No claim to original U.S. Government work; no government endorsement implied.

Free next step: JHA/JSA planning and field-verification worksheet

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/tensioned-lines-cables-release-path