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BREATHE EASY: CURB RESPIRATORY ILLNESS INTENSIFIES

*As Namibia navigates the peak of the 2026 summer season, the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) has issued a renewed call for public vigilance regarding respiratory health. With a dual focus on managing **Chronic Respiratory Diseases (CRDs)**—such as asthma and COPD—and preventing the spread of **infectious respiratory diseases**, the government is doubling down on community awareness and clinical intervention.*



Despite significant strides in healthcare, respiratory ailments remain a major contributor to morbidity across the Land of the Brave. Recent data from the 2025/2026 financial year highlights that while communicable diseases like TB are under aggressive management, environmental factors

and lifestyle shifts are driving a rise in chronic conditions.

The Invisible Threat: Environmental Factors

Research conducted in urban centers like Windhoek and Tsumeb has revealed a startling link between air quality and lung health. High concentrations of **Particulate Matter (PM)**—often stemming from dust, vehicle emissions, and industrial activities—have been identified as primary triggers for chronic coughing and breathlessness.

"We are seeing a trend where residential dust and outdoor pollution are no longer just nuisances; they are public health risks," noted a health official during a recent briefing in the capital. "For those with pre-existing conditions like asthma, these environmental factors can be life-threatening."

Key Risk Factors in Namibia:

- **Dust Exposure:** High levels of respirable dust in high-density suburbs.
- **Fuel Usage:** Continued reliance on solid fuels for cooking in some rural areas.
- **Seasonal Shifts:** Peaks in respiratory-related deaths typically occur in the colder months (June–August) and late December.



Tuberculosis: The Fight for "Zero New Infections"

Namibia remains among the countries with a significant TB burden, but the **National Strategic Plan (2023/24 - 2027/28)** is hitting its stride. The government has committed over **N\$114 million** to public health programs this year, with a heavy emphasis on TB and HIV integration.

The goal is clear: **90-90-90**.

1. Reach **90%** of all people with TB and place them on treatment.
2. Reach **90%** of key and vulnerable populations.
3. Achieve a **90%** treatment success rate.

Local organizations like the **TB Free Foundation of Namibia** are working alongside the MoHSS to break the stigma that often prevents people from seeking early testing.

Managing the "Silent" Chronic Conditions

While infections often grab the headlines, the Ministry is urging Namibians not to ignore the signs of **Asthma** and **Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)**.

With **World Asthma Day** approaching on May 7th, 2026, health clinics are gearing up to offer free screenings and inhaler technique

workshops. Health experts emphasize that chronic conditions require consistent management rather than just emergency treatment during a crisis.

Quick Tips for Respiratory Wellness:

- **Ventilation:** Ensure homes are well-ventilated, especially when cooking.
- **Early Detection:** Seek medical help if a cough lasts longer than two weeks.
- **Adherence:** For asthma patients, use "preventer" inhalers as prescribed, not just "relievers" during an attack.

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- **Hygiene:** Maintain hand hygiene to prevent the spread of seasonal flu and other viral infections.

Looking Ahead: A Healthier Future

The Ministry's "**One Health**" approach recognizes that human health is inextricably linked to the environment. By strengthening laboratory capacities and expanding telehealth services to rural clinics, Namibia is building a more resilient system capable of early detection and sustained care.

As the 2026 health calendar progresses, the message to every Namibian is simple: **Your breath is your life—protect it.**



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Cucumber water for muscle cramps: What's the truth behind this sports myth?

Athletes often turn to cucumber water for cramps, most recently tennis player Carlos Alcaraz at the Australian Open. Studies suggest that it could actually help – but not in the way many might think.

The match seemed decided, but then everything changed. In the semifinals of the Australian Open tennis tournament, Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz was leading Germany's Alexander Zverev by two sets, with only a few points separating him from victory. Suddenly, however, Alcaraz began to limp noticeably, losing many points and dragging himself to the bench during the break. Cramps. A

massage didn't seem to help. Zverev won the set, sensing his opportunity.

At the next opportunity on the bench, Alcaraz grabbed a small bottle and emptied it in a few gulps. Pickle juice. That's the salty, vinegary liquid in which cucumbers are preserved.

Just a few minutes later, Alcaraz was back to his old self. More than two hours later, he narrowly defeated Zverev in five sets. This memorable, gripping match provided further support for the claim: Pickle juice can quickly relieve muscle cramps in sports! Is there any truth to this?

What studies on pickle juice show

For several years now, some athletes have sworn by pickle juice,



sometimes also called cucumber juice or pickle vinegar brine, for muscle cramps. Alcaraz has also been among them for a few months. However, studies paint a mixed picture. For example, an Australian study[1] found no significant difference between regular water and pickle juice in terms of their cramp-relieving effect.

An American study, on the other hand, came to different conclusions: After drinking water, the cramps of test subjects lasted an average of 134 seconds – after drinking pickle juice, however, the cramps lasted an average of 84 seconds, which is about a third less.

"Looking at all the studies together, the effects don't seem to be very large. But it is quite likely that pickle juice could have at least a small cramp-relieving effect," says Lars Donath, professor at the Institute for Training Science and Sports Informatics at the German Sport University Cologne.

Not Salt, but Nerves

The suspected mechanism behind the potential effects of pickle juice is not related to replenishing electrolytes lost through sweating, a deficiency of which is often the cause of muscle cramps. According to researchers, nerve pathways are

more likely to play a role in pickle juice: The strong acid and intense flavor of the cucumber juice trigger a reflex in the mouth that sends a signal inhibiting the cramping muscles. This effect occurs via the nerve pathways and can happen almost immediately – much faster than would be possible through the intake of salt or fluids.

Because of this mechanism of action, it seems likely that pickle juice – which is essentially the brine from

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pickled cucumbers and therefore readily available – is unlikely to prevent muscle cramps. "If you imagine muscle soreness as a kind of fire, then things like sufficient magnesium, electrolytes, and fluids are, in a sense, fire prevention measures. Pickle juice, on the other hand, is primarily suitable – if at all – for extinguishing a fire that has already broken out," explains sports scientist Donath.

The strong acidity and intense flavor of the cucumber juice trigger a reflex in the mouth that sends out a signal that inhibits cramping. It's therefore probably not very useful for athletes to drink cucumber water before exercise to prevent cramps. However, Alcaraz's approach could certainly be beneficial: drinking cucumber water only after a cramp has already occurred, in order to relieve it more quickly.

What else helps against muscle cramps? Generally, stretching and gently contracting the affected muscle are the most helpful remedies for muscle cramps, as this reduces excessive muscle activity. Heat – such as a hot water bottle or a warm shower – can also promote blood circulation and relax the muscle. Some people also find cold soothing during physical exertion. "Especially during intense exercise, it's important to ensure adequate fluid and energy intake, as well as sufficient magnesium," advises Donath.

And of course – even though it wasn't an option for Carlos Alcaraz in Australia – temporary rest also helps with cramps, says Donath. After all, cramps are ultimately a sign of muscle overexertion. You could also say: They are calling for a break!

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Health & Safety - A Fall Protection Deep Dive

OSHA regulations, weight capacity, aerial lifts, and other critical fall protection considerations

It is no surprise that Fall Protection tops the list of the Occupational Health and Safety Administration's (OSHA) list of the Top 10 most frequently cited workplace standards, as for the 14th year in a row it is number one on the 2024 list.¹



Regardless of whether you have years of experience in the construction industry or are new to the job, you are most likely familiar with the “ABCs of Fall Protection,” consisting of Anchor Points, Body Harnesses, and Connecting Devices. But what about some of the more complex scenarios and applications that go beyond the ABCs? An understanding of some of these more specific and often asked questions can help ensure you have the proper fall protection PPE for your jobsite and application and help prevent contributing to the OSHA Top 10.

What is the Weight Capacity for Fall Protection PPE?

The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standard – ANSI Z359.11 – states that a full-body harness should be able to support users within the capacity range of 130 – 310 lbs.² A harness may be rated to a larger capacity (e.g., 400 lbs.) for OSHA and CSA standards, but to meet the ANSI standard, capacity must conform to the ANSI limits shown in large type on the label's first page.

As background, the technology behind the fall protection equipment products and the industry testing standards ultimately dictate these weight ranges. Falls can generate extremely high forces that must be taken into consideration when determining the proper weight capacity for PPE. For example, users who are too light may not generate enough force to deploy the energy absorbing pack, or users who are too heavy may require additional distances to help stop a fall, which are outside scope of the calculated fall clearance charts.

What Standards Are Available for Arc-Rated Personal Fall Limiters?

Like standard Self-Retracting Lanyards (SRLs) and PFLs, arc-rated PFLs will be rated to the applicable regional standard; this includes ANSI and OSHA standards for the United States and the CSA standard for Canada. For arc-flash products



specifically, there is a standard called ASTM F887. This standard only applies to fall protection harnesses, energy-absorbing lanyards, arborist saddles, climber straps, and a few other items.

Self-retracting devices are not included in the ASTM F887 standard. However, the same test methods can be applied to the self-retracting devices to determine whether they are suitable for use in arc-flash applications. This includes exposing the device to an electric arc. Under the ASTM F887 testing standards, any load-bearing materials must not have after-flame for greater than 5 seconds, or in other words, it must self-extinguish in 5 seconds or less. Non-load-bearing components and accessories must self-extinguish in 15 seconds. There cannot be melting or dripping on any load-bearing material. After the arc-flash testing is complete, the self-retracting device that was exposed to an arc-flash will be dynamically tested and must arrest the test mass after a drop.³

How Do the Revisions to OSHA 29 CFR 1926.95 Impact PPE Selection?

Released in December 2024 and effective January 2025, revisions to 29 CFR § 1926.95 “Personal Protective Equipment in Construction” clarify the language around PPE fit. Specifically, § 1926.95(c) now states that “Employers must ensure that all personal protective equipment: (1) Is

of safe design and construction for the work to be performed; and (2) Is selected to ensure that it properly fits each affected employee.”⁴

When selecting PPE in light of this revision, considerations may include factors such as sizing and adjustability. For example, harnesses often come in various sizes, and depending on the manufacturer, additional features that allow the user to tighten or loosen the harness as needed, or feature additional contoured padding, can help improve fit and enhance worker comfort.

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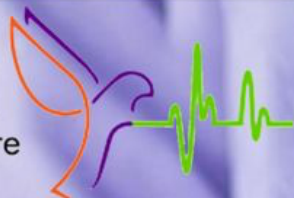
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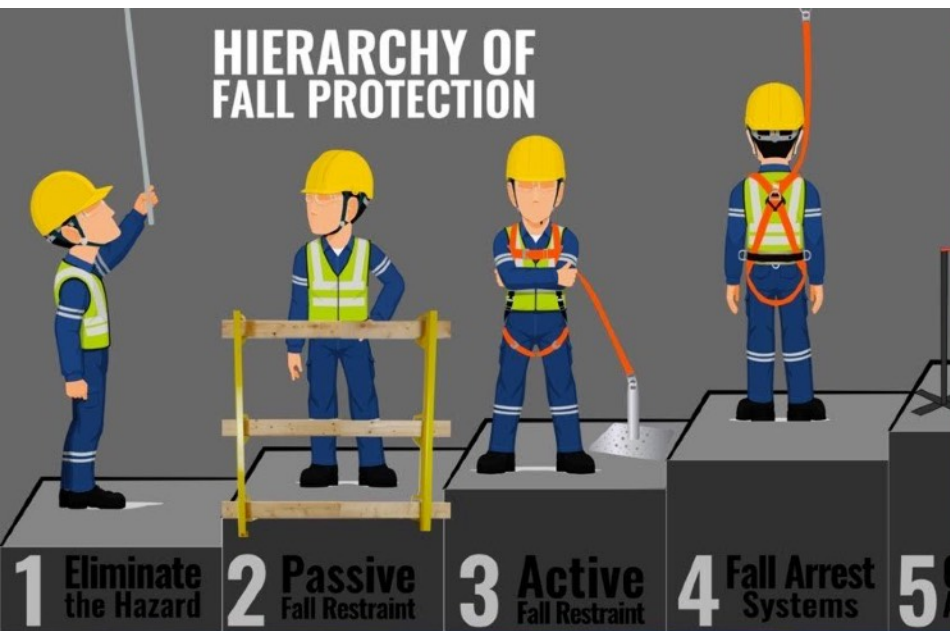
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The Principles of Fall Protection Safety

Why Are External Energy Absorbers Now on the Majority of PFLs?

The main reason users are seeing more energy absorbers outside of the PFL or SRL these days is largely due to the trends towards leading-edge rated (Class II) products. Class II products are designed to help reduce risk in a leading-edge fall event where the line constituent becomes snagged or stuck on the edge. This prevents the line from moving smoothly during deceleration and then forces rise, which could sever the line. Having an energy absorber near the end user (or weight during the standard test) helps to manage these forces and to help reduce the risk of the line being severed.

Be cautious, though, just because there is an energy absorber near the connector, external to the PFL or

SRL, this does not necessarily mean a product is “leading edge” or Class II rated. Always read the product label and user instructions to confirm the Class II standard icon is found on the product.

What PPE Should be Considered in Aerial Lifts and Other Mobile Elevated Work Platforms (MEWPs)?

When it comes to aerial lifts and other MEWPs, the ANSI recommendation is to use a restraint lanyard that prevents the worker from being able to fall out of the basket. If that is not possible, then ANSI recommends that workers use a Class II, leading-edge SRD for MEWPs or any other tie-off that is below the d-ring of the harness.



As a reminder – and especially when it comes to some of the more unique jobsite hazards and applications that may require arc-rated gear or concerns about weight capacity – training and proper use of the selected PPE are important to helping maintain safety while working at height. National standards and state, provincial, and federal laws may require the user to be trained before using fall protection PPE. Reference to product user manuals may also be incorporated as part of a user safety training program that is appropriate for the user's occupation. Employers often provide these instructions to users before use of the product and allow users to retain the instructions for ready reference. Employers may require the user to read, understand (or have explained), and follow all instructions, labels, markings, and warnings supplied with the product and with those products intended for use in association with it.

REFERENCES:

<https://tinyurl.com/25m7mbt2>

<https://tinyurl.com/4fyw8f2e>

<https://tinyurl.com/6p4znp9f>

<https://tinyurl.com/yf74u6mr>

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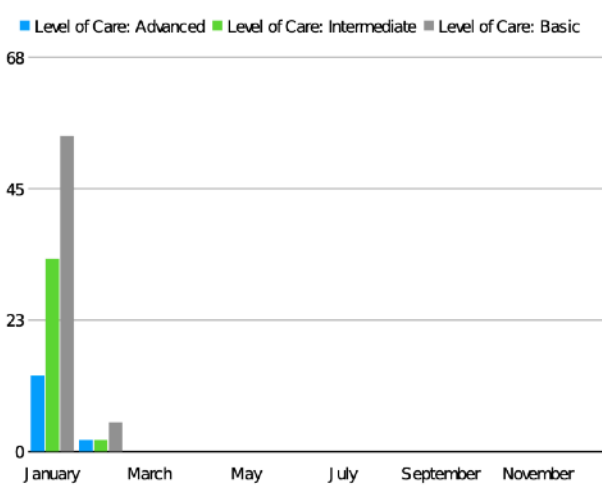
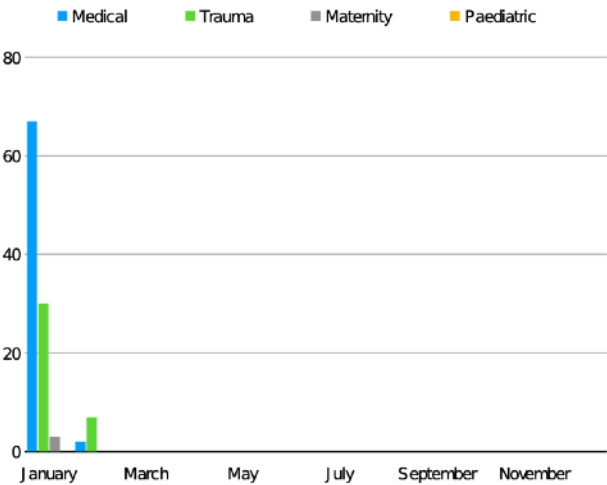
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	Medical	Trauma	Maternity	Paediatric	Level of Care: Advanced	Level of Care: Intermediate	Level of Care: Basic
January	67	30	3	0	13	33	54
February	2	7	0	0	2	2	5
March	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
April	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
May	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
June	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
July	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
August	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
September	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
October	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
November	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
December	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total per annum	69	37	3	0	15	35	59
Total	109				109		



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