

# A Unique Alternative: Industrial Rope Access



Industrial Rope Access (IRA) is a unique alternative to suspended scaffolds and traditional rope descent in the window washing industry. It was introduced to the Chicago market by Corporate Cleaning Services (CCS) in early 2017. IRA is a means of descent and ascent that is exempt from the OSHA 1910.27 height restriction that limits the use of rope descent to 300' above grade.

This system differs from traditional rope descent in a number of ways:

- Standardized training and certification after written, physical and skill evaluation.
- Front mounted fall arrest system/Class III Harness: significantly decreases "Fall Factor".
- Ability to ascend. Capable of ascending with descender and descend with ascender.
- Utilizes Type III harness with multiple points of attachment and chest ascender.
- Training required to rescue self and team members. Rescue Training exercises every 90 days.

All training for Industrial Rope Access is based on standardized criteria developed and maintained by The Society of Professional Rope Access Technicians (SPRAT). If a company says, "We can do rope access", you might consider asking to see their SPRAT certificates for proof of certification.

The IRA system is centered in rescue. Self-rescue and rescue of others is a required skill for a SPRAT technician. In the case of a suspension line break or failure, using a traditional rope descent system, the user would be hanging from a dorsal mounted lanyard, a minimum of 3' from the physical "rope grab" device. The user is basically helpless at this point. Furthermore, there is no physical connection to the chair creating an exposure for the chair and bucket to slide off and fall to the ground.

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## Industrial Rope Access, continued...

**Building Owners:** Choosing a Rope Access Company To choose a Rope Access provider confidently, one must be informed as to the regulations, requirements, and qualifications expected of them. Property managers are encouraged to verify that all rope access technicians have been certified by SPRAT.

**Qualifications:** Qualifications, in this respect, mean the ability to perform the given task, or job. Simply put, Rope Access is most often a means of access, not necessarily task completion. When seeking out a Rope Access company, the first question should be “will you be able to complete this task?” If the answer is yes, then you can move on to more industry-specific questions.

**Industry Certifications:** All Rope Access companies are comprised of individuals with Rope Access Certifications. There are currently two certifying bodies, SPRAT and Industrial Rope Access Trade Association (IRATA). Rope access certifications expire every 3 years. It is important for the building owner or manager to verify all technicians are properly certified.

**Experience:** A Rope Access client must conclude that the Rope Access company has the appropriate training, tools, and know-how to get the job done. More experienced technicians will have ascended to level II (lead technician) or level III (supervisor) roles. These roles are essential in maintaining safety, efficiency, and supervision on the jobsite.

**Supervision:** Proper on-site supervision is often the role of the Level II or III technician. This individual not only possesses all the abilities of a technician

but fills other roles as well. When selecting a Rope Access company, it is essential to find out who is filling the necessary roles on each jobsite. Building owners are encouraged to verify Level II and III supervision.

**Insurance:** Like most industries, insurance plays a large role in the ability of a company to provide services while providing adequate protection for the client, the public, employees, and the structure. Approach this topic early in the relationship between the client and Rope Access provider to assure proper coverage for all parties.

**Documentation:** Documentation is essential to the success of each Rope Access company, technician, and jobsite. Prior to start, Corporate Cleaning Services (CSS) performs a site-specific hazard and a written plan is prepared to define how the work will be performed safely. As a follow up, the management staff will perform routine on site safety inspections to verify the work plan if followed. CCS performs inspections via smart phone and all reports are filed in a digital database.

Additional information regarding IRA may be found at <https://sprat.org/>

