



Choosing a Rope Access Company

A Guide to Understanding the Requirements and Qualifications Needed to Successfully Perform Rope Access Work

The application of Rope Access is one that applies to hundreds of industries, environments, and job tasks. In order to choose a Rope Access provider confidently, one must be informed as to the regulations, requirements, and qualifications expected of them. This paper is intended to be a guide into that decision. There are a number of common topics covered in this paper, but by no means is it exhaustive. The choice in rope access provider ultimately lies in the client. Topics covered include:

- 1.1.1. Qualifications
- 1.1.2. Industry Certifications
- 1.1.3. Experience
- 1.1.4. Supervision
- 1.1.5. Insurance
- 1.1.6. Documentation

- 1.) **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. For example, one Rope Access provider might be qualified to perform blade repair on a wind turbine, but not inspect a bridge. Depending on the job you are seeking for completion, different Rope Access providers may provide differing levels of service. 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.
- 2.) **Industry Certifications:** All Rope Access companies are comprised of individuals with Rope Access Certifications. This means the individual has been tested orally, in writing, and hands-on to demonstrate the necessary knowledge and abilities to perform Rope Access work to a specific level. There are currently two certifying bodies, SPRAT (Society of Industrial Rope Access Technicians) and IRATA (Industrial Rope Access Trade Association). Both bodies certify their technicians to 3 levels, increasing in scope and experience from Level 1 to Level 3. Rope Access companies must have the appropriate levels of Supervisors (Level III) on staff and on the job-site to complete the task safely and within industry guidelines.
- 3.) **Experience:** Experience is an integral key of the Rope Access company. This experience is two-fold. First, how experienced are they in the given task at hand? A Rope Access client must conclude that the Rope Access company has the appropriate training, tools, and know-how to get the job done. Second, what is the level of Rope Access experience? Generally, an Rope Access company consists of differing levels of technicians. 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 job-site.

- 4.) **Supervision:** Proper on-site supervision is often the role of the Level III technician. This individual not only possesses all the abilities of a technician, but fills other roles as well. Depending on the Rope Access company and size of the job, this individual(s) might fill the role of safety supervisor, foreman, lead rigger, etc. When selecting a Rope Access company, it is essential to find out who is filling the necessary roles on each job-site.
- 5.) **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. While specifics are outside the scope of this paper, the topic must be approached early in relationship between the client and Rope Access provider to assure proper coverage for all parties. Historically, Rope Access has enjoyed a safety track-record unparalleled in most industries.
- 6.) **Documentation:** Documentation is absolutely essential to the success of each Rope Access company, technician, and job-site. All documentation shall be up-to-date and available to the client upon request.

On a company level, documentation should be available upon request for:

- Training and certification of employees
- Equipment management, including inspection, use, training, etc.
- Written fall protection & rescue programs

Technicians shall carry a logbook documenting experience with them, as well as their certification cards for their given Rope Access level.

Each job-site comes with its own documentation, most notably the Job Hazards Analysis (JHA). The JHA is a written document, completed daily, that includes:

- Personnel on site
- Job Scope
- Necessary Equipment
- Detailed description of all hazards potential to workers and public.
- Detailed mitigation methods for all hazards presented
- Emergency Resources, Rescue Plan

In conclusion, it is the intention of this paper to ease the potential clients process in selecting a Rope Access company. Rope Access has been proven to add safety, efficiency, and versatility to a number of job types and sites. Utilizing this guide will touch on a number of major topics that need to be addressed when choosing a Rope Access provider. Ultimately, with enough research and planning, the right Rope Access company will often exceed clients expectations and help develop long-term solutions to their needs.

About SPRAT

The Society of Professional Rope Access Technicians (SPRAT) based in the United States, is dedicated to promoting the safe development of industrial rope access standards worldwide.

SPRAT supports companies and technicians using rope access with certification programs, regulatory support, networking, and opportunities to participate in developing industry-consensus standards.

Membership in the organization is open to any company or individual that uses rope access. Current members include a broad cross-section of commercial industry, professional services, and government agencies.

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