

Rigging the Right Way

When it comes to A/V rigging, best practices can save lives.



Make no mistake: the A/V industry is lucky to have such a terrific rigging safety record. Much of this luck can be attributed to the skill of the founding fathers of entertainment rigging, a field that began just 40 years ago. When this small group of riggers first started to suspend sound systems and lighting systems in the air, much trial and error was performed in order to create a collection of safe rigging practices for the industry. Many of those practices remain in use today, but they are now validated with the industry-specific application of good engineering principles and calculations. Furthermore, today's personal computer programs and dedicated structural engineering software products have made it fairly simple to model the most complicated structures with excellent precision. But no matter how complex the installation may be, a good understanding of the fundamentals will go most of the way to ensuring a secure installation. If one makes the time to think things through and refuses the temptation to cut corners on the rigging system, it can be done without fancy programs or expert consultants.

GET IT DONE

As with any overhead application, everything begins with the structure itself. How does one know if the building can support the load? Will that wood beam running down the center of the peaked roof support an additional 500 pounds? How about that concrete block wall—will it support 100 pounds of wallmount without eventually succumbing to fatigue? Without incorporating the services of a professional engineer, you won't know the answers to those questions, so turn to an expert.

There are creative ways to make this happen without the service costing colossal sums of nonbid money. If the project is a church, try

Above: Wire rope sling OSHA tags.