

## A Pro's Advice on Going Aloft

**A** good investment for anyone who plans to go aloft is Brion Toss's excellent video on the topic. Available at his website, [www.briontoss.com](http://www.briontoss.com), the one-hour video covers the essential skills and procedures for going aloft safely. Here are a few of tips Toss shares:

- **Harness and clothing:**

Although not as comfortable as traditional chairs, harnesses bring you closer to the top of the mast and are more secure. Wear long pants and good shoes.

- **Halyards:** Use two halyards; one primary, one safety. One should be an external halyard on a ratchet block leading from your harness back to you, so that you can have control over your own safety and ascent/descent.

- **Shackles and winches:** Don't rely on snap shackles or self-tailing jaws on winches. To attach the halyard to the harness, use locking screw-pin shackles or a buntline knot, which brings you closer to the masthead sheave than a bowline.

- **Tools:** Always bring vice grips and a non-folding rigging knife aloft. Toss also brings a crescent wrench welded to a marlin spike. Attach a lanyard to all tools.

- **Going aloft at sea:** To reduce swinging, use a carabiner to secure your harness to a jackline halyard run tightly from the masthead to deck.

- **Mast steps:** Steps are a good idea at the mast bottom, for handling the main, and at the top of the mast, for relieving weight on the harness or chair while working at the masthead.

