

About Summit Anchor Co.

The ‘kick test’ seemed to be just enough for window washers back in the mid-1980s. If Gus Strats was on a roof and found a protrusion that didn’t shift or move after kicking it, he would secure his ropes to it, grab his gear, and lower himself in his boatswain chair to clean windows on buildings as tall as 16 stories. The only test for window washers back then was when a window washer suspended from it. Most times their support held tight, some times it did not. Other window cleaners and suspended maintenance workers fastened their equipment the same way, and still do, Strats said.

But after several years of cleaning windows this way, Strats began thinking more about the nature of his work. These thoughts kept him up at night, hovered in his mind each time he lowered himself in his chair, especially after he once returned to his ropes to find that he’d forgotten to put counterweights in place. Had his unsecured outrigger failed, he could have fallen to his death.



Gus using new anchors at the Post (1998)

“How important is my life to me, my wife, and family? Was I going to continue to risk my life cleaning windows just to make a living? Was there a way to work safely?” Strats wondered.

Thinking about safe window cleaning was the jump-off for what is now Summit Anchor Company, a Frederick-Maryland-based leader in fall protection and suspended maintenance equipment since 1997. There are larger players in its industry but Summit Anchor strives to be a leader in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region. The company provides a single source contact for design, engineering, manufacturing, installation, testing and certification of suspended access and fall protection systems.

Safe anchor points are vital components of a fall protection system. Building owners, building managers and construction firms need anchor points on roofs from which to attach lanyards, lifelines



Gus using new anchors at the Post (1998)

and other forms of tie-off to prevent workers from falling as they work at heights. Also workers use anchors for suspended maintenance operation for direct rigging of rope descent systems or as tie-back for counterweighted outriggers.

The company has scaled anchor installation and retrofit projects big and small, including the following:

- 655 New York Avenue in Washington, D.C., managed by Brookfield Properties
- 1900 Reston Metro Plaza in Reston, Virginia, developed by Comstock Partners
- 1000 and 1100 Wilson Boulevard in Arlington, Virginia, managed by Monday Properties
- 401 E. Pratt Street, Baltimore, Maryland, World Trade Center

Summit Anchor strives to set the standard for safe working conditions through its anchorage systems and services. And the company wants to soar to new heights as a pacesetter in anchor systems throughout the Mid-Atlantic region, the United States and the world all the while maintaining its core value: Preservation of life.



Gus using new anchors at the Post (1998)

The Beginnings

Born in 1966 in Washington, D.C. but raised mostly in the city's sprawling suburbs, Gus Strats was more interested in emulating guitarists in bands like Rush, Led Zeppelin, ZZ Top, and Lynyrd Skynyrd as a youth. He performed with high school friends at local music gigs. "My vision was to be a rock star," Strats said. But soon he realized that he needed a real job that pays the bills. He worked cutting grass for a landscaping business. In his late teens, after making some life changes that included studying the Bible, he began paving a different tract for his life.

Soon, too, the baseball-field perfection and onerous push lawnmower began to wear on him, and he considered other work. Strats was hooked when a friend

told him about the window cleaning business. "I thought it'd be nice to sit down [on a boatswain chair] instead of pushing a lawnmower...I didn't consider the height, just considered sitting down," Strats said. "And then I found out that window cleaning wasn't all that safe."

In 1988, Strats started Summit Window Cleaning as a mostly one-man operation, though his wife Agata Strats helped with some interior window cleaning, bookkeeping and marketing. Summit Window Cleaning had nearly 20 window cleaning contracts in the D.C. area when Strats began thinking about the safety of his work. After a few years of cleaning windows, Strats began realizing that the kick test was not enough, and could mean injury or even one day prove fatal for him. Once while cleaning the windows on a building with no anchors, Strats hurt his back while moving a counterweighted outrigger. He could hardly walk after his shift.

He soon began researching why there were no anchorages on building roofs. As he talked with several local window cleaning companies he realized that others had the same safety issues. Also, Strats approached a client, an operations manager at The Washington Post Building at 15th and L Streets in Washington, D.C.,

about the lack of certified anchors on its building. The operations manager said they were considering anchorages but made no promises. Strats asked if he could take on the anchor retrofitting job, which he was able to land. The former Washington Post building at 15th and L Streets was demolished in 1997, and Summit Anchor also designed, manufactured, tested and certified the anchors and davits at the new building erected in the same spot, Fannie Mae's national headquarters. With its first major anchor retrofit at the Washington Post building under its belt a new vision emerged for Strats' company: Summit Window Cleaning would now become Summit Anchor Company.

"I thought that this had a future," Strats said.

On Its Way Up

Summit Anchor has gone from mostly Strats and his wife to a team of 18 including designers, manufacturing welders, salesmen, project manager, installation manager and inspectors of suspended access and fall protection equipment.

Industry analysts predict that with increased worker awareness of proper working conditions and enhanced safety regulations, the fall protection and personal protection industry is a growing market. Additionally, some companies and organizations are emphasizing a safety culture in the workplace because of enhanced federal standards and industry guidelines.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were 849 fatal occupational injuries from slips, trips, and falls in the U.S. in 2016. Non-fatal workplace injury and illness incidence rates from slips, trips, and falls resulting in lost work days in 2016 was 26.2 per 10,000 full-time workers.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration issued the Walking-Working Surfaces and Personal Fall Protection Systems rule in 2016 to address these workplace hazards. The Walking-Working Surfaces rule requires building operators to add proper anchorage systems for window cleaning professionals to attach their suspension and safety lines. Also the International Window Cleaning Association I-14 Window Cleaning Safety Standard was written specifically for those in the window cleaning industry.

"This is what we've strived for in our working careers forever: to have buildings compliant," said Kenny Cohn, president of Kevco Building Services Inc., a Gaithersburg, MD, exterior building services, window cleaning and pressure washing company. Cohn said that 30 years ago most buildings lacked anchors and OSHA had no regulations mandating that building owners have them, so window washers tied their rope descent systems to whatever they deemed sturdy and secure. "It was like the Wild, Wild West up there," Cohn said.

Lawrence D. Green, president of Clean & Polish Business Solutions, hopes that building operators comply with the IWCA I-14 guidelines and OSHA's Walking-Working Surfaces rule. "Over the past few decades I have seen few anchors, putting the contractors working on these buildings at tremendous risk – therefore a number of



Gus testing new anchors at the Post (1998)

accidents throughout the country,” Green said. “Since then, building owners and managers have given greater attention to wanting to provide a safe workplace for their contractors.”

OSHA believes its enhanced rule will prevent nearly 30 fatalities and 5,842 lost-workday injuries each year, and estimates that businesses will save \$615 million annually, according to an OSHA spokesperson.

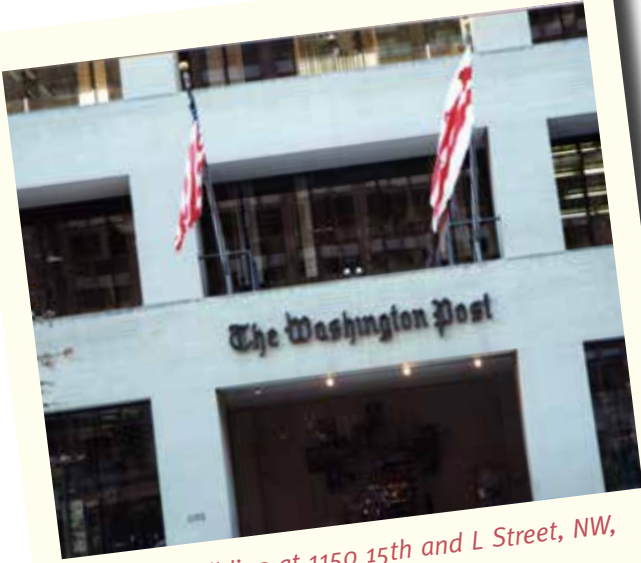
To meet these needs, Summit Anchor has easy-to-use suspended access and fall protection systems that are used extensively by high-rise window cleaners and other suspended maintenance workers throughout the U.S. and the world. Though the majority of Summit Anchor’s business is local, the company has worked in California and Hawaii, and on international projects in Africa – Chad and Mozambique. Roof anchors can be as simple as an anchor ring or as complex as a complete lifeline system – which can include Summit Anchor’s dropped, forged, quenched and tempered steel anchor eye, able to hold a 5,000 pound load without permanent deformation.

The company’s forged anchor eye ensures consistent performance of all its anchors. The heat treatment and cooling process capitalizes on the properties of the steel to create anchor eyes with reduced risk of catastrophic failure due to brittleness. When a worker’s life is on the line, Summit Anchor’s forged eye will withstand the dynamic loads imposed to keep workers safe.

“We are known for our quality and conscientiousness,” Strats said. “We have been doing this for over 20 years and the reputation we have built sets us apart.”

Summit Anchor, motivated by morals over money, principles over profits, paves the way to a thriving innovative suspended access and fall protection company. At the end of the day, this small firm provides products and services that save the lives of window cleaners, construction workers and others who use their systems. Today, the true test for Summit Anchor is that at the end of the day workers return home alive to their families.





*The Post Building at 1150 15th and L Street, NW,
circa 2000*



*Connected to the Post Building at 1100 15th St., NW,
circa 2000, managed by The John Akridge Company*