

POLICY FOR HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE

PART C ARRANGEMENTS

SECTION 10

WORKING AT HEIGHT

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1 INTRODUCTION

Falling from height is one of the most common causes of death and serious injury in UK workplaces and one of the highest risk activities undertaken by our workforce. On average, 13 people a year die by falling from ladders at work and almost 1200 suffer major injuries. More than a quarter of falls happen from ladders, but even a fall from a low height can cause serious harm. For these reasons, specific regulations have been passed which place duties on employers to carefully consider and manage the health and safety issues around working at height.

Definition - Work at Height means working anywhere where there is a risk of a fall liable to cause personal injury. The term 'work' includes moving around at a place of work, except by a staircase in a permanent workplace, but does not include travel to or from a place of work. It includes complicated activities, such as building or dismantling a scaffold, or apparently simple ones, like putting up a display or reaching a book on a high shelf. Even apparently low risk activities can lead to serious injury if they are not managed properly.

Under the Regulations there is **no minimum height**, but all work activities must be controlled if there is a risk of falling a distance liable to cause personal injury. A person can be 'at height' even if they are at or below ground level (for example in an underground shaft) if they could be injured by falling. For example, a fall into a well or excavation would be classified as a fall from height.

This section of the council's health and safety policy explains actions to prevent or reduce the risk of falls, and complies with the Work at Height Regulations. It applies to all managers and employees, including Premises Controllers and staff who contract others to work at height. DU Directors must ensure that all work at height within their area of responsibility is managed effectively and in line with this document.

2 RESPONSIBILITIES

The council must do everything reasonably practicable to prevent falls. The prime consideration should be to try to avoid work at height wherever possible. In situations where work at height cannot be avoided, work equipment or other measures must be used to prevent falls taking place. Where the risk of a fall cannot be eliminated, work equipment or other measures to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall must be used. The Regulations require duty holders to ensure that:

- All work at height is properly planned and organised;
- People who work at height are trained and competent;
- The place where work at height is done is safe;
- Equipment for work at height is appropriately inspected;
- The risks from fragile surfaces are properly controlled;
- The risks from falling objects are properly controlled.
- All work at height takes account of weather conditions that could endanger health and safety;

Managers – The Regulations place duties on DU Directors or their nominated representatives, Premises Controllers, School Governors and Head Teachers. It also applies to any person who controls the work of others, such as contract managers or building owners, who may contract others to work at height.

Employees - Working at height is a high risk activity, and it is essential that employees give managers any relevant information that could affect their ability to work safely at height, for example:

- Recurring dizziness
- Epilepsy
- Psychiatric conditions (including the fear of heights)
- Heart conditions
- Severe lung conditions
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Significant impaired joint function
- Medication that recommends that machinery should not be operated could be risk

In addition to the above, employees must use any equipment supplied (including safety devices) properly after receiving training and instruction. They must also report any safety hazards if they are working under the control of another person.

Contractors - Contractors must also follow the precautions set out here, and the council officer managing the contract must monitor the contractor's work to make sure they manage work at height properly. Contractors must always provide their own equipment, particularly ladders. **The council will not lend ladders or other similar equipment to visiting contractors.**

3 PREVENTION

To prevent falls, any work at height must be carefully **risk assessed** and managed, the **equipment** must be suitable and in good condition, the **environment** must be considered, and the people at work must be **competent**.

3.1 RISK ASSESSMENT

Managers must ensure that work is done at height is avoided if it is safe and reasonably practicable to do the job in another way, for example, cleaning a window using a pole instead of climbing a ladder.

In other words, **do not work at height unless there is no alternative**. If it is impossible to avoid working at height, the work must be properly planned, supervised, and carried out as safely as reasonably practicable. This includes planning for emergencies and rescue where this might be needed.

Risk assessments must be completed; information about how to conduct a risk assessment is contained in [Part C, Section 1 of the council's health and safety policy \(Managing Health & Safety\)](#).

When using contractors to work at height, managers must ensure that they are competent ask for evidence that they have carried out suitable and sufficient risk

assessments. The risk assessment must highlight the measures to ensure that people are not at risk of falling from height or from falling objects.

- Look for hazards associated with falls from height around the workplace. Where are people required to work at height? Do they work on ladders, platforms or scaffolds?
- Decide who might be harmed and how. Who comes into the workplace? Are they at risk? Are some groups more at risk than others?
- Consider the risks. Are there already measures in place to deal with the risks? Look at areas with unguarded openings or without guardrails and covers. Are regular inspections carried out?
- Is it possible to reduce the risk by reducing the height needed for the work, or reducing the number of people and the time they have to spend working at height?
- Can the job itself be changed to reduce the risk of falling?
- Record the findings on the corporate risk assessment form.
- Regularly review the assessment. If any significant changes take place, make sure that precautions are still adequate to deal with the risks.

The risk of slips and trips, and of falling objects must also be considered.

3.2 EQUIPMENT

When selecting equipment, managers must take into account the health and safety risks at the place where the equipment is to be used along with the working conditions. They must also take account of the distance and consequences of a potential fall; and the duration and frequency of use.

Priority should be given to collective protection measures over personal protection measures when selecting equipment. For example equipment that protects many people, for example nets and airbags, should be given priority over equipment for individuals, such as harnesses and other fall arrest equipment.

For higher risk activities like working on scaffolds, managers must also take into account the need for easy and timely evacuation and rescue in an emergency; and any additional risk posed by the use, installation or removal of the work equipment.

Some equipment is simply not suitable for using as a work platform, because it has not been designed for this purpose. Chairs, tables, boxes, storage racking and shelves should never be used. Manufacturers' guidelines are a useful guide as to whether equipment can be safely used for working at height.

Inspection of equipment

Inspection is a crucial aspect of controlling the risk of falls from height. It is defined as 'visual or more rigorous inspection by a competent person as is appropriate for safety purposes including any testing appropriate for those purposes'.

DU Directors must ensure that there are appropriate numbers of competent people to carry out these inspections. If there are no competent people within the organisation, a consultant can be used, but it is the responsibility of the manager to make sure that this person is competent.

As far as it is reasonably practicable, managers must ensure that each location where there is work at height is checked on every occasion before that location is used.

All items mentioned under schedules 2 to 6 of the Regulations must be inspected after they are assembled and/or installed, and as often as is necessary to ensure safety - particular to make sure that any deterioration can be detected and remedied in good time. The list of items is as follows:

- Guard rails,
- Toe boards,
- Barriers,
- Working platforms,
- Scaffolding,
- Personal fall protection systems,
- Work positioning systems,
- Rope access and positioning techniques,
- Ladders.
- Collective safeguards for arresting falls (i.e. anchors, airbags, landing mats),

Equipment belonging to another business or which leaves the employers business, must be accompanied by a clear indication that the last inspection required by these regulations has been carried out.

A report of inspection should include the following information:

- a) The name and address of the person for whom the inspection was undertaken.
- b) The location of the work equipment inspected.
- c) A description of the work equipment inspected.
- d) The date and time of the inspection.
- e) Details of any matter identified that could give rise to a risk to the health or safety of any person, and of any action taken,
- f) Details of any further action considered necessary.
- g) The name and position of the person making the report.

Equipment not owned by the council

Ensuring that equipment is safe for use, and properly used are the most effective ways of ensuring that falls from height do not occur. For this reason, council employees must not borrow equipment such as ladders from another employer.

Ladders and step ladders, and other work platforms

Managers should only instruct staff to use ladders for work at height if a risk assessment has demonstrated that more suitable work equipment was not justified because of the low risk, the short duration of use or existing features

which cannot be altered. For detailed information on the use of ladders, visit the HSE website, at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/falls/ladders.htm>. **Appendix 1** is a list of general requirements for the use of ladders and step ladders. **Appendix 2** gives information about the use of Work platforms, such as mobile lifts or 'cherry-pickers'.

Fall arrest systems

There are two types of fall arrest systems, **collective** and **individual**. They should be used when there is no other way to prevent a fall and their purpose is to remove or minimise the injury caused if someone falls from height.

Collective systems, such as safety nets, are the best option, as they protect many people, and do not depend on individuals taking their own precautions.

Individual systems, like safety harnesses should only be used when there is no other viable option, including collective systems, and the risk of falling still exists.

Fall arrest systems must only be used when a risk assessment has concluded that there is no other reasonably practicable way to do the job safely, and that the system used does not make the work activity any less safe. There must also be safe and reliable rescue procedures in place. Providing safe fall arrest systems is a specialised area of work, and specialised guidance should be sought by managers considering it. General precautions are that they **must**:

- Be suitable and of sufficient strength to protect any person who is liable to fall.
- Be stable and securely attached where necessary;
- In the case of an airbag, landing mat or similar safeguard, be stable;
- The user and a sufficient number of available persons have received adequate training, including rescue procedures.
- In the case of harnesses etc, fit the user properly be correctly fitted, designed to minimise injury to the user and be fitted or adjusted to prevent the user falling or slipping from it, should a fall occur;

3.3 ENVIRONMENT

Fragile roofs and other surfaces

Falling through weak and fragile surfaces, such as ceilings and sky-lights, is a common cause of serious falls from height. Part of the risk assessment for work at height is whether the surfaces involved are strong enough to hold the people and equipment required for the work. Managers must ensure that no one working under their control goes on or near a fragile surface unless that is the only reasonably practicable way for the work to be carried out safely, having regard to the demands of the task, equipment, or working environment.

If anyone must work on or near to a fragile surface, managers must ensure that suitable platforms, coverings, guard rails, and the like are provided (and used) in order to minimise the risk. They must also do all that is reasonably practicable, if any risk of falling remains, to minimise the distance and effect of the fall.

People must be made aware of the danger of any fragile surfaces preferably by clear and prominent warning notices fixed at the approaches to the danger zone.

The weather

Weather conditions (wind, rain, temperature, visibility, etc) can have a significant effect on many work activities, including working on ladders, using mobile platforms, and fixed scaffolds. The risk assessment must take account of these factors.

Falling objects

Falling objects present a risk from working at height, and there are duties on employers and those in control of others in this regard.

Where it is necessary to prevent injury, managers must do all that is reasonably practicable to prevent anything from falling. If this is not reasonably practicable, they must ensure that no one is injured by anything falling.

Nothing should be thrown or tipped from height if it is likely to injure anyone; neither should anything be stored in such a way that its movement would be likely to injure anyone.

If the workplace contains an area in which there is a risk of someone being struck by a falling object or person, managers must ensure that the area is clearly indicated and that unauthorised people are unable to reach it.

Other environmental factors

Factors such as traffic, the risk of interference with and trespass onto work areas, and the stability of the ground must also be considered in the risk assessment.

3.4 COMPETENCE

As with all work activities, everyone involved in working at height, including managers and the people actually at work, must be competent for their part of the work activity. This means that they must have enough knowledge and experience to do their job safely. The following issues must be considered:

- Managers who manage work at height must know about this arrangement, other guidance available, and how to risk assess the need for working at height and the precautions to take if work at height cannot be avoided.
- Anyone that regularly uses a ladder or step ladder must be taught how to use it safely, including where to place it, how to secure it, and what kind of work it is safe to do.
- Anyone involved in putting up a scaffold, whether permanent or temporary, must be qualified to do so.
- Employees that need to use harnesses or other fall arrest systems must be taught how to use it properly, when to use it, and what emergency recovery procedures are in place.
- Premises controllers must be made aware of the importance of not lending equipment to visiting contractors.

4 FURTHER INFORMATION

The health and safety executive (HSE) provides a great deal of information on its website. Visit <http://www.hse.gov.uk/falls/index.htm> for more information.

For advice and information about practical issues in working at height, or any other health and safety matter, contact the Health and Safety Team.

LADDERS AND STEPLADDERS

Is a ladder the most suitable piece of equipment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a risk assessment been carried out? • Can the job be done in another way?
Is the activity suitable?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum of 30 minutes (for longer jobs, use different access equipment, such as a portable scaffold or cherry picker) • Light work only (nothing strenuous, maximum weight of equipment 10kg) • Is there a handhold? • Can the job be done with the person keeping 3 points of contact with the ladder? • Do you need to carry equipment or tools? (if so, use a tool belt or similar container) • Do not overload the ladder (check the maximum safe load) • Do not over-reach (keep your belt buckle within the sides of the ladder).
Buying a ladder or stepladder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think of the worst conditions (slippery, uneven floors, etc.) and allow for that. • Use only class 1 industrial (or EN131) ladders.
The environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check the floor surfaces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Slopes and gradients ○ Secure firm surface • Check other conditions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Weather (rain, wind etc) ○ People or traffic that might cause a risk or be at risk from falling objects • Is there somewhere to secure the ladder? • Are there any other hazards in the area (for example, power lines)
The condition of the ladder or stepladder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ladders should be inspected annually, and be marked with a reference number and inspection date, • There should be no visible defects, especially loose parts, or damage to the feet of the ladder (ladder training should include visual checks) • Is it suitable for the load and environment (see 'Buying a ladder or stepladder') above
Competence of staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have staff received training in using ladders?

WORK PLATFORMS

<p>Is the platform suitable?</p>	<p>A working platform must be large enough to allow the safe passage of workers and the safe use of any equipment or materials required and to provide a safe working area for the work being carried out.</p> <p>It should also provide a suitable surface and, in particular, be constructed so that the surface of the working platform has no gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • through which a person could fall; • through which any material or object could fall and injure a person; or • giving rise to other risk of injury to any person, unless measures have been taken to protect persons against such risk; and • be so erected and used, and maintained in such condition, as to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable - the risk of slipping or tripping; or on being caught between the working platform and any adjacent structure. <p>Loading</p> <p>A working platform and any supporting structure must not be loaded so as to give rise to a risk of collapse or to any deformation which could affect its safe use.</p>
<p>Is there suitable edge protection?</p>	<p>Guard rails, toe-boards, barriers or similar means of protection, must comply with the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be of adequate dimensions, strength and rigidity for the purposes for which they are being used; • be placed, secured and used ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, that they do not become accidentally displaced; • be placed to prevent, so far as is practicable, the fall of any person, material or object from any place of work • the top guard rail or other similar means of protection must be at least 950mm above the edge from which any person is liable to fall • toe-boards shall be suitable and sufficient to prevent the fall of any person, material or object, from any place of work • any intermediate guard-rail or similar means of protection must be positioned so that any gap between it and other means of protection does not exceed 470mm
<p>Is the platform stable?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The surface upon which the supporting structure rests must be stable and strong enough to safely support the structure, the working platform and the load. • In the case of a wheeled structure, the wheels must be

	<p>lockable;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In other cases, be prevented from slipping by secure attachment to the bearing surface or to another structure, provision of an effective anti-slip device or by other means of equivalent effectiveness; • Be stable while being erected, used and dismantled • A working platform must – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Be suitable and of sufficient strength and rigidity for the purpose or purposes for which it is intended to be used or is being used; ○ Be so erected and used as to ensure that its components do not become accidentally displaced so as to endanger any person; ○ When altered or modified, be so altered or modified as to ensure that it remains stable; and ○ Be dismantled in such a way as to prevent accidental displacement.
<p>Additional requirements for scaffolding</p>	<p>Scaffolding may be assembled, dismantled or significantly altered only under the supervision of a competent person, and by persons who have received appropriate and specific training in specific risks which the operations may entail and precautions to be taken, and more particularly in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding of the plan for the assembly, dismantling or alteration of the scaffolding concerned; • safety during the assembly, dismantling or alteration of the scaffolding concerned; • measures to prevent the risk of persons, materials or objects falling; • safety measures in the event of changing weather conditions which could adversely affect the safety of the scaffolding concerned; • permissible loadings; • any other risks which the assembly, dismantling or alteration of the scaffolding may entail.

FLOW CHART TO ASSIST IN MANAGING WORK AT HEIGHT

