

Working At Height Policy

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Working At Height

Introduction

Working at heights can be dangerous. Falls account for more deaths and serious injuries in construction than anything else. Nearly half of them are from or through roofs and frequently involve fragile materials. Any fall from a roof inevitably involves at least serious injury.

What is “work at height”

A place is ‘at height’ if a person could be injured falling from it, even if it is at or below ground level.

‘Work’ includes moving around at a place (except by a staircase in a permanent workplace) but not travel to or from a place of work. For instance, a sales assistant on a stepladder would be working at height, but we would not be inclined to apply the Regulations to a mounted police officer on patrol.

Falls occur

- From the edges of roofs
- Through gaps or holes in roofs
- Through fragile roof materials and roof lights

In addition, many people have been seriously injured by material falling or thrown from roofs.

Any work on a roof is high risk and as a result high safety standards are essential. The nature of the precautions needed may vary from one job to another.

Precautions for all roof work

You must do all that is reasonably practicable to prevent anyone falling.

Use work equipment or other measures to prevent falls.

Where you cannot eliminate the risk of a fall, use work equipment or other measures, to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall, should one occur.

A risk assessment should be carried out for all roof work. All roof work is dangerous, and it is essential that the risks are identified before the work starts and that the necessary equipment, appropriate precautions and systems of work are provided and implemented.

Safety method statements should be specific and relevant to the job in hand and clearly describe the precautions and system of work identified during risk assessment.

Getting on and off the roof

- Getting on and off the roof is a major risk. A secure means of entry and exit is essential. A properly secured ladder is the minimum requirement a haki staircase is the preferred method.

Edge protection

Wherever anyone could fall from a height, adequate edge protection must be provided.

- A main guard rail at least 950mm above the edge;
- A toe board at least 150mm high;
- An intermediate guard rail or other barrier so that there is no gap more than 470mm.

A roof parapet may provide equivalent protection, if it is at least 910mm high, but if it does not, extra protection will be required.

Work platforms

- As well as edge protection it is as important to provide an adequate and secure working platform. In many cases the roof itself will provide this. If it does not a platform should be provided.
- Any platform used for (or access to) construction work and from which a person could fall must be inspected in place before use (or not more than seven days before use). Where it is a mobile platform, inspection at the site within the previous 7 days is sufficient without re-inspection every time it is moved. A platform must also be inspected each time that exceptional circumstances have occurred which are liable to jeopardise its safety (e.g. heavy winds, vehicular impact)

Fall arrest equipment

- Adequate platforms and edge protection may not always be possible. If so, either safety nets or harnesses will be required. They do not stop falling but minimise the potential injuries.
- In all instances, where it is practicably possible, safety netting should be installed.
- Where nets are used, they must be properly installed by competent riggers as close as possible below the roof involved to minimise the distance fallen. Installing a net does not mean that proper working platforms and edge protection can be ignored. The priority is to stop people falling in the first place.
- If harnesses are used make sure that they are securely attached to a sufficiently strong anchorage point and that they are always worn. This requires user discipline and active management monitoring.

Falling material

- Keep a tidy site: stop material which could fall from accumulating.
- Nothing should ever be thrown from a roof. Use enclosed rubbish chutes or lower material to the ground instead.
- Prevent access to danger areas underneath or adjacent to roof work. Where this cannot be guaranteed, use debris netting, fans, covered walkways or similar safeguards to stop falling material causing injury.

- Care is needed where there is public access close to roof work. If possible, arrange for work to be carried out when passers-by will not be there. If this cannot be arranged minimise the public access to danger areas.

Training

Anyone working at height needs to be able to recognise the risks, understand the appropriate systems of work and be competent in the skills to carry them out.

- Installing and wearing harness systems;
- Installing edge protection;
- Operating a mobile access platform.
- Working on scaffolding or cradle systems

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