

Factsheet: Working at Height

Legislation

The Work at Height Regulations 2005

Introduction

- Falls from height are one of the biggest causes of workplace fatalities and major injuries.
- In 2015/16, 26% of all workplace fatalities were as a result of a fall from height.
- In 2016/17, there were 43,000 reported workplace non-fatal injuries due to falls from height.
- In the 5 years to 2016/17, 49% of fatalities in the construction injury were caused by falls from height.*

**HSE statistics*

What is “working at height”?

Working at height means working in (or going to or from) a place where it is possible to fall a distance and sustain an injury. This place may be below or at ground level, for example, if you are working near to an excavation.

What the law says

Employers and those in control of any working at height activity must make sure that all work is properly planned, risk assessed, supervised and carried out by competent people.

- You must **AVOID** working at height where it is reasonably practicable to do so.

Where working at height cannot be avoided, a **RISK ASSESSMENT** must be carried out. Control measures must be applied in the following priority:

- **PREVENT** falls by workplace design or equipment.
- Where the risk cannot be eliminated, **MINIMISE** the distance and consequences of a fall.

You must prevent the fall from height of any material or object which may cause injury to any person. If this risk cannot be prevented, then steps **MUST** be taken to prevent any person being struck by a falling object. You must ensure that nothing is thrown from height, and that all items are stored suitably to prevent them falling or otherwise causing risk to people in the area.

What you can do

AVOID working at height:

- Carry out as much work as possible from the ground, for example by using extendable tools.

PREVENT a fall from occurring:

- Use an existing place of work which is already safe, for example a non-fragile roof with a permanent guard rail.
- Ensure that all workers can get to and from their place of work safely.
- Use mobile elevating work platforms (MEWPs), scaffolds or tower scaffolds.
- Use a personal restraint system that prevents a fall from being possible.
- Do not store stock at height: if it must be stored there ensure that it is secure and unable to topple.

MINIMISE the distance and / or consequences of a fall:

- Install safety nets and soft-landing systems
- Supply suitable fall arrest harnesses.
- Ensure that there are emergency evacuation and rescue procedures in place.
- Prevent access around the working area for other people.

Remember:

- All equipment supplied must be checked and maintained. All people must be trained and competent in the use of equipment.
- All people working at height must be competent to do so. Training in safe working at height may be required.

Ladders & stepladders

For low-risk, short-duration tasks, ladders and / or stepladders may be the sensible solution. If you make the decision to use a ladder or stepladder, this must be justified with a risk assessment, and the appropriate control measures applied.