



**Subject: Working at Height**

**Tool Box Talk No.: 068**

'Work at height' means work in any place where, if there were no precautions in place, a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal injury (for example a fall through a fragile roof).

Working at height remains one of the biggest causes of fatalities and major injuries in the construction industry and common causes of accidents include falls from ladders and through fragile surfaces.

If working at height always ensure that work is properly planned and supervised and that work is carried out by competent people with the skills, knowledge and experience to do the job.

Always use the proper equipment - don't improvise with what materials and equipment are 'to hand'.

Take a sensible approach when considering precautions. Low-risk, relatively straightforward tasks will require less effort when it comes to planning and there may be some low-risk situations where common sense tells you no particular precautions are necessary.

When planning a work at height activity consider the height of the task, the duration and frequency, and the condition of the surface being worked on.

Before working at height work through these simple steps:

Avoid work at height where it's reasonably practicable to do so

Where work at height cannot be easily avoided, prevent falls using either an existing place of work that is already safe or the right type of equipment

Minimise the distance and consequences of a fall, by using the right type of equipment where the risk cannot be eliminated

For each step, always consider measures that protect everyone at risk (collective protection) before measures that only protect the individual (personal protection).

Collective protection is equipment that does not require the person working at height to act for it to be effective. Examples are permanent or temporary guardrails, scissor lifts and tower scaffolds.



Personal protection is equipment that requires the individual to act for it to be effective. An example is putting on a safety harness correctly and connecting it, with an energy-absorbing lanyard, to a suitable anchor point.

## **Dos and don'ts of working at height**

Do:

- As much work as possible from the ground
- Ensure workers can get safely to and from where they work at height
- Ensure equipment is suitable, stable and strong enough for the job, maintained and checked regularly
- Take precautions when working on or near fragile surfaces
- Provide protection from falling objects
- Think about emergency evacuation and rescue procedures

Don't:

- Overload ladders – consider the equipment or materials workers are carrying before working at height. Check the pictogram or label on the ladder for information
- Overreach on ladders or stepladders
- Rest a ladder against weak upper surfaces, eg glazing or plastic gutters
- Use ladders or stepladders for strenuous or heavy tasks, only use them for light work of short duration (a maximum of 30 minutes at a time)
- Let anyone who is not competent (who doesn't have the skills, knowledge and experience to do the job) work at height

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