



Working at Heights

November 2022

PP-WH-HSP-22

1. What is 'work at height'?

A place is 'at height' if (unless these Regulations are followed) a person could be injured falling from it, even if it is at or below ground level.

'Work' includes moving around at a place of work (except by a staircase in a permanent workplace) but not travel to or from a place of work. For instance, a librarian on a stepladder would be working at height, but not an employee driving a tractor.

2. Application of the Work at Height Regulations, 2005

The Work at Height Regulations, 2005 apply to all work at height where there is a risk of a fall liable to cause personal injury. They place duties on employers, the self-employed, and any person who controls the work of others (e.g. facilities managers or building owners who may contract others to work at height) to the extent they control the work.

3. Detailed requirements of the Regulations

The Regulations contain detailed requirements for the following items:

- Existing places of work and means of access for work at height
- Collective fall prevention (e.g. guard rails and toe boards)
- Working platforms
- Collective fall arrest (e.g. nets, airbags etc)
- Personal fall protection (e.g. work restraints, work positioning, fall arrest and Rope access)
- Ladders and step ladders
- Inspection reports (for working platforms in construction only)

4. Responsibility of leaders, volunteers and members

Leaders, volunteers and students must

- Report any safety hazard to their supervisors;
- Use the equipment supplied (including safety devices) properly, following any training and instructions (unless they think that would be unsafe, in which case they should seek further instructions before continuing).

5. Hierarchy of control measures

There is a simple hierarchy for managing and selecting equipment for work at height:

- Avoid work at height where possible;
- Use work equipment or other measures to prevent falls where working at height cannot be avoided;
- Where the risk of a fall cannot be eliminated, use work equipment or other measures to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall, should one occur.

6. Responsibilities of leaders supervising or planning work at heights

Such leaders will ensure that:

- all work at height is properly planned and organised;
- all work at height takes account of weather conditions that could endanger health and safety;
- those involved in 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.



7. Planning and organising

Leaders who supervise or plan work at heights must:

- ensure that no work is done at height if it is safe and reasonably practicable to do it other than at height;
- ensure that the work is properly planned, appropriately supervised, and carried out in as safe a way as is reasonably practicable;
- plan for emergencies and rescue;
- take account of the risk assessment that should have been carried out.

8. Bad Weather

Leaders who supervise or plan work at heights must ensure that the work is postponed while weather conditions endanger health or safety.

9. Training

Leaders and volunteers who supervise or plan work at heights must ensure that everyone involved in the work is competent (or, if being trained, is supervised by a competent person). This includes involvement in organisation, planning, supervision, and the supply and maintenance of equipment.

Where other precautions do not entirely eliminate the risk of a fall occurring (as far as it is reasonably practicable to do so) those who will be working at height must be trained how to avoid falling, and how to avoid or minimise injury to themselves should they fall.

10. The place where work is done

Leaders who supervise or plan work at heights must ensure that the place where work is done at height (including the means of access) is safe and has features to prevent a fall, unless this would mean that it is not reasonably practicable for the worker to carry out the work safely (taking into account the demands of the task, equipment and working environment).

11. Equipment, temporary structures, and safety features

Leaders who supervise or plan work at heights must provide equipment for preventing (as far as reasonably practicable) a fall occurring if the place where work is done does not have features to prevent a fall.

If the precautions do not entirely eliminate the risk of a fall occurring you must do all that is reasonably practicable to minimise the distance and effect of a fall.

When selecting equipment for work at height:

- the most suitable equipment must be used;
- collective protection measures (e.g. guard rails) must be given priority over personal protection measures (e.g. safety harnesses);
- the working conditions;
- risks to the safety of all those at the place where the work equipment is to be used must be taken into account.

All equipment, temporary structures (e.g. scaffolding), and safety features must comply with the Work at Height Regulations, 2005.

12. Inspections

'Inspection' is defined as 'such visual or more rigorous inspection by a competent person as is appropriate for safety purposes... (including) any testing appropriate for those purposes'.



(As far as it is reasonably practicable to do so) each individual place at which work is to be done at height must be checked on every occasion by staff that supervise work at heights before that place is used. This involves checking the surface on every parapet, permanent rail etc.

All access equipment must be inspected:

- after it is assembled or installed (or after it has been assembled and installed if both are required), if its safety depends on how it is assembled or installed;
- as often as is necessary to ensure safety, and in particular to make sure that any deterioration can be detected and remedied in good time.

Before any such equipment is used, which has come from another business, and before any equipment leaves the department where it was used, a check must be made to ensure that an indication (clear to everyone involved) is provided to show that the last inspection required by these Regulations has been carried out.

Note: This does not apply to lifting equipment governed by the Lifting Equipment and Lifting Operations Regulations, 1998, but since that rule is similar to this one there is little practical difference.

Any platform used for (or for access to) construction work and from which a person could fall more than 2 m must be inspected in place before use (and not more than seven days before use). Where it is a mobile platform, inspection at the site is sufficient without re-inspection every time it is moved.

Note: 'Construction work' broadly means 'the carrying out of any building, civil engineering or engineering construction work'. 'Platform' includes areas like gangways and stairways.

The person inspecting a platform must:

- prepare a report before going off duty in accordance with Section 12 of Appendix 25;
- give the report (or a copy) within 24 hours of completing the inspection to the person for whom the inspection was done.
- The report of a platform inspection must be kept:
 - at the construction site until the work is completed;
 - then with Phoenix for another three months.

'Keeping' a report means keeping it (or a copy) safe from loss and unauthorised interference, and so that a printed copy can be supplied when required.

All other records of inspection must be kept until the next inspection has been carried out.

These requirements do not apply to lifting equipment governed by the similar rules imposed by the Lifting Operation and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998.

13. Fragile surfaces

No one must go onto or near a fragile surface unless that is the only reasonably practicable way for the worker to carry out the work safely, having regard to the demands of the task, equipment or working environment.

If anyone does work on or near a fragile surface, staff that supervise or plan work at heights must:



- ensure (as far as it is reasonably practicable to do so) that suitable platforms, coverings, guard rails, and the like are provided (and used) to minimise the risk;
- do all that is reasonably practicable, if any risk of a fall remains, to minimise the distance and effect of a fall.

If anyone does go onto or near a fragile surface, all reasonably practicable measures must be taken to make them aware of the danger, preferably by using prominent warning notices fixed at the approaches to the danger zone.

14. Falling objects

Where it is necessary to prevent injury, all that is reasonably practicable must be done to prevent anything falling.

If it is not reasonably practicable, measures must be taken to ensure that no one is injured by anything falling.

Nothing must be

- thrown or tipped from height if it is likely to injure anyone;
- stored in such a way that its movement is 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, you must ensure that the area is clearly indicated and that (as far as reasonably practicable) unauthorised people are unable to reach it.

