

The Work at Height Regulations 2005

Summary of the Regulations

The Work at Height Regulations 2005 consolidate previous legislation on working at height. Additionally they implement a European Council Directive concerning minimum safety and health requirements for the use of equipment for work at height.

The Regulations will apply to all **work at height where there is a risk of a fall liable to cause personal injury**. No minimum height is specified thus application is dependent upon assessment of the risks under the circumstances of the operation and the reasonable practicability of control measures. Activities include working at height off ladders, step ladders, scaffold towers, mobile elevated working platforms or in locations from which people could fall, such as roofs, parapets or similar natural locations.

They place duties on employers, the self-employed, and any person that controls the work of others to the extent of their control (for example facilities managers or building owners who may contract others to work at height).

The Regulations do not apply to the provision of instruction or leadership in caving or climbing by way of sport, recreation, team building or similar activities.

There Regulations apply the following hierarchy for managing work at height and selecting equipment for the work:

- avoid work at height where reasonably practicable,
- 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,

Specific requirements are that:

- all work at height is properly planned, supervised and conducted,
- the risks from work at height are assessed and appropriate work equipment is selected and used,
- the place where the work will be done is safe,
- weather conditions are taken into account,
- those involved in work at height are trained and competent,
- the risks from falling objects are properly controlled (to prevent someone below from being struck),
- the risks from fragile surfaces are properly controlled (to prevent someone falling through),
- equipment for work at height is properly inspected and maintained,
- provide physical measures to prevent unauthorised access into danger areas,
- and post warning signs at the approach to danger areas where access is authorised,

The principle is to choose the right work equipment and select collective measures to prevent falls (such as guard rails and working platforms) before other measures which may only mitigate the distance and consequences of a fall (such as nets or airbags) or which may only provide personal

protection from a fall. A ladder may only be used for work at height where the risk assessment demonstrates that the use of more suitable work equipment is not justified because of the low risk and the use will be of short duration or there are existing features on work area that cannot be altered.

Any equipment used for work at height that is obtained from another organisation or company must be covered by an inspection certificate. Similarly such equipment if transferred from the University to another organisation must be accompanied by a current inspection report.

The Regulations include Schedules giving requirements for:

- suitability of places of work and means of access for work at height,
- collective fall prevention e.g. guard rails, toe boards, barriers etc and working platforms,
- collective fall arrest e.g. nets, airbags etc,
- personal fall protection e.g. work restraints, fall arrest and rope access,
- ladders,

The HSE has published a [simple guide](#) to the Regulations.

Guidance on undertaking a Work at Height risk assessment

It is important to undertake a risk assessment for work at height tasks/activities. This is important to ensure that the level of risk to individuals who may fall is well understood, so that appropriate steps can be taken to reduce those risks.

The first stage of the risk assessment is to identify if work at height can be avoided by designing the risk out, for example:

- Window cleaning can be undertaken on the ground using long handled brushes,
- Control equipment can be installed at ground level,

If work at height cannot be avoided then the hazards associated with work at height must be risk assessed, namely:

Means of access/egress

Assess the risk of a fall from the selected means of access/egress to a place at height:

- vertical or inclined fixed ladder,
- portable ladders and stepladders,
- mobile elevated work platforms (MEWPS),
- man-riding basket (attached to a crane/forklift),
- scaffold (tube & coupler),
- mobile platforms and system tower scaffolds,
- rope access (specialist contractor),
- trestles and 'hop-ups',
- kick stool,

Work at height location

Assess the risk of a fall from/into the location where the work is undertaken:

- roofs,
- lift shafts,
- elevated experimental and teaching rigs,
- open/unprotected chamber/tank/well/excavation,

- working outside protection of existing hand-railing/guard rails,
- top of vehicle lorry bed's and tail lifts,

Can a fall be prevented by

- replacing a ladder with a fixed stairway,
- correct selection of temporary access equipment,
- mobile elevating work platform (MEWP/cherry picker),
- scaffolding instead of ladders,
- portable ladder correctly inclined, footed and tied and maintaining 3 points of contact,
- providing a net or airbags to minimise consequences of any fall,
- fitting a fall arrest/restraint system,
- installing temporary barriers whilst chamber's/excavation's are open,
- fitting guard rails on top of tankers,
- redesign so access is not required,

Fragile surfaces

Assess the risk from fragile surfaces involved when working at height. Their presence in, or near the working area, increases the risk. A fragile surface is one, which would be liable to break if a person worked on it or fell onto it. Examples are:

- fibre and asbestos cement roof sheets,
- skylights,
- corroded floor gridding,
- incomplete composite tin roofs,
- glass Reinforced Plastic panels,
- crusted surfaces on sludge tanks/lagoons,
- bridged materials in silos,

You should try and avoid the need to work on or near or pass across such fragile surfaces by:

- repairing a skylight from underneath using a tower scaffold or from above using a cherry picker,
- prevent a fall by using fixed walkways with guard rails to get across a fragile asbestos cement roof,
- use suitable working platforms with guard rails during work on or near a fragile surface,
- minimise the consequences of a fall by using nets, airbags or fall arrest,
- where there is a risk of someone passing across, near to or working on, from or near to a fragile surface, prominent warning notices are fixed at the approach to the fragile surface. If this is not practicable, people must be made aware by other means (e.g. site induction, control of contractors documentation),
- permanently fixed ladders that lead to areas near or adjacent to fragile surfaces must be signed and effectively blocked when access is not required,

Falling objects

Assess the risk of people or materials falling. These must be controlled (e.g. through the use of guardrails and toe-boards or work positioning devices). Typical items at risk of falling would include:

- materials, kicked or knocked-off,
- fittings,
- tools,
- sheet materials (wind-blown),
- temporary access components e.g. scaffold fitting,
- personal protective equipment (PPE),

Materials and equipment must be not be:

- thrown or tipped from height if it is likely to injure anyone,
- stored in such a way such that movement is likely cause it to fall or collapse, overturn, become blown over or move unintentionally,

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 access to unauthorised people is securely restricted.

Danger areas

Assess the risks from working at height near to any danger areas. Including:

- proximity to overhead power cables or bus-bars,
- proximity to fixed structures such as beams,
- trap area between building and MEWP counter-weight,
- areas under or around work at height,
- protrusion into road or footways of temporary access equipment,

Weather

Assess any weather condition presenting a risk to those working at height, such as:

- heavy rain,
- snow or sleet,
- strong winds,
- ice and frost,

Staff should be informed that weather should be monitored as part of their ongoing dynamic risk assessment during work at height activities.

Identify People at Risk

An important part of any work at height risk assessment is the identification of those at risk when work at height is undertaken.

- consider where people work,
- permanent locations e.g. office premises, water and sewage treatment works, depots and stores,
- temporary locations e.g. porta-cabin roofs, sheds and other similar structures,
- unmanned and/or remote locations e.g. some field operations,
- locations accessed by members of the public e.g. public areas of Campus's,

Consider people who may be especially at risk:

- employees who work alone, e.g. cleaners, security staff, contractors,
- people who are in isolated areas, e.g. maintenance staff, staff on cranes, reach trucks and cat walks,
- young or inexperienced persons,
- people who are unfamiliar with the premises, e.g. seasonal workers, contractors,
- visitors, customers or those with disabilities who may not be aware of work at height risks or who may have difficulty in detecting the controls put in place to protect them,
- people whose first language is not English,

Training must be provided for all individuals required to work at height, as a minimum, training must include:

- significant findings of the work at height risk assessment, and the measures in place to reduce and control the risks identified,
- details of the work activity and individuals' duties and responsibilities under the safe system of work,
- correct erection, use and dismantling of temporary access equipment,
- appropriate use of any personal safety devices,
- safe use of all other personal protective equipment (PPE),
- explanation of the emergency procedures,