



UTC Plymouth

Working at Height Policy

Regulations apply to work at height where there is a risk of a fall liable to cause personal injury. There are no height limits. The Regulations place duties on employers, the self-employed, and any person who controls the work of others to the extent of their control (e.g. facilities management may contract with others to work at height to clean windows).

Requirements

The Regulations require:

- All work at height is properly planned and organised and the risks assessed
- Work at height is avoided wherever possible
- Appropriate work equipment or other measures are selected and used to prevent falls where working at height cannot be avoided
- Where the risk of a fall cannot be eliminated, appropriate work equipment or other measures are used to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall should one occur
- Those involved in work at height are competent
- Equipment for work at height is properly inspected and maintained and records of these are available
- The risks from fragile surfaces are properly controlled - all fragile roofs must have appropriate hazard warning signs.

The Regulations include a number of schedules giving detailed requirements for existing places of work and means of access for work at height; for collective fall prevention (e.g. guardrails and working platforms); for collective fall arrest (e.g. nets, airbags etc.); for personal fall protection (e.g. work restraints, fall arrest and rope access) and for ladders.

Operational information is summarised in the following sections

- Window cleaning
- Roof safety systems
- Ladders and mobile elevating work platforms (MEWP)
- General access scaffolding
- Tower scaffolding

Window cleaning

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have produced a number of guidance documents concerning window cleaning: Safety in window cleaning using portable ladders MISC 613; Safety in window cleaning using suspended and powered access equipment MISC 611; and Safety in window cleaning using rope access techniques MISC 612.

- These publications should be used to evaluate the safety of window cleaning operations (which are normally carried out by contractors).
- The employer must ensure that contracts for window cleaning require the work to be carried out in accordance with relevant HSE guidance.

Roof safety systems

Latchway cable systems can be installed either for work restraint or for fall arrest as an alternative to provision of edge protection. Eyebolts can be installed either for work positioning in conjunction with latchway cables, or for window cleaning. Cradle systems either on runways or from beam locations can be installed to provide safe access for window cleaning.

- All systems must be examined at intervals not exceeding 12 months (6 months for cradle systems). Repair, replacement or full de-commissioning and provision of alternative systems is necessary where equipment is found to be below standard.
- Fall protection equipment (FPE) must be supplied correctly for each installation and examined thoroughly at intervals not exceeding 12 months. This includes checking that no FPE has been in service for more than 5 years.

- Training must be provided for all employees who need access to the roof etc. Individuals must not be allowed to use these safety systems unless they have received appropriate training. Contactors should provide a method statement with risk assessment and proof of training before commencing work.
- FPE must be visually inspected for safety before use, and a log must be kept of visual inspections and descriptions of which FPE is used, when and by whom.
- NB Only the trans fasteners should be issued to contractors. Contractors are responsible for provision of their own full body harness and lanyards.

Ladders and mobile elevating work platforms (MEWP)

Ladders and stepladders are regarded primarily as a means of access only. They should only be used as workplaces for short periods of time and then only if the use of more suitable equipment is not justified because of low risk and when the residual risk is adequately controlled. It is generally safer to use a tower scaffold or a MEWP.

Ladders (including step ladders)

The use of ladders is only permitted where the use of more suitable work equipment such as, tower scaffolds, podium steps, temporary stairs or MEWPs is not appropriate and the work can be reached without stretching, the ladder can be secured to prevent slipping and a good handhold is available (unless, in the case of a stepladder and when carrying a load, the maintenance of a handhold is not practicable).

- Ladders must conform to the appropriate British Standard or other standard i.e. BS 2037 or EN 131. Ladders intended for domestic use only are not recommended for use at work.
- Ladders must be in good condition. The UTC is responsible for implementing a programme of regularly examining ladders under their control and records of these examinations must be kept. There must also be a visual inspection before each use, which involves checking that:
 - The stiles are not damaged, buckled or warped
 - No rungs are cracked or missing
 - Safety feet or other safety devices are not missing.
- Painted ladders should not be used as the paint may hide faults. (Coating with preservative and clear varnish is recommended).
- Ladders (not stepladders) must be correctly angled (one out for every four up, i.e. approximately 75 degrees to the horizontal). Where ladders are used as a means of

access they should extend approximately one metre above the access platform, unless some other adequate handhold is available.

- Ladders must only be used on a firm, level surface and they should rest against a solid surface, not against fragile or other insecure materials such as plastic guttering or asbestos cement sheet. Ladders must be secured from falling: if a ladder cannot be secured by a physical fixture, then a second person must foot the ladder during use.
- The top platform of a stepladder must not be used unless it is designed with handholds for that purpose.

MEWPs

The use of MEWPs must be the subject of a prior risk assessment. The person operating the equipment must be trained and competent. The platform must be provided with guardrails, toe boards or other suitable barriers to prevent falls. MEWPs must be in good condition and used on firm and level ground.

MEWPs must be maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and thoroughly examined at six monthly intervals by a competent person. Where MEWPs are the property of the employer, the thorough examination should be carried out by the employer's insurers and the insurance company must be informed in writing that this is required. Records of regular maintenance and thorough examination must be retained.

General access scaffolding

This can be under the control of 'main' contractors but some may be provided via direct contracts. In the case of direct contracts, the scaffold company must provide written evidence of their competence.

Scaffolding must be inspected by a competent person:

- Before it is put into use
- At seven day intervals until it is dismantled
- After bad or excessively dry weather or high winds or another event likely to have effected its strength or stability
- After any substantial additions or other alterations.

A written report of inspection in 'statutory' format must be prepared by the competent person. The report should normally be written out at the time of the inspection but must be provided within twenty-four hours.

A copy of the report must be kept on site with a named person. A further copy must be retained for a period of three months from the completion of the work in the office of the person on whose behalf the inspection was carried out.

Any employee placing a contract for scaffolding work must ensure that inspections will be carried out and that appropriate inspection reports are available for viewing by external inspectors.

A holder of the CITB Advanced Scaffold Inspection Certificate or equivalent will be accepted as being competent to carry out general access scaffolding inspections.

Any scaffolding which fails an inspection must be verbally reported to the person responsible for placing the original contract as soon as possible by the person carrying out the inspection. The necessary remedial action must be carried out by the scaffolding company and a re-inspection carried out by a competent person before the scaffolding can be put into use, or further use.

Where scaffolding is erected in an area generally accessible to any persons the following should apply:

- The minimum amount of equipment and materials should be stored on the scaffold
- Persons should be prevented from walking under or near the scaffold by means of physical barriers (not tape)
- All ladders at ground level should be removed when scaffolding is left unattended.

Tower Scaffolding (whether prefabricated or not) including those on hire

Formal instruction and training must be provided by competent persons for all those who erect and strike tower scaffolds. Training may be provided by the company supplying the tower scaffolding or some other reputable organisation. Towers should rest on firm level ground with the wheels or feet properly supported. Safe access to and from the work platform must be provided.

Tower scaffolds must be inspected by a competent person and a record of the inspection must be made and kept for three months after dismantling the scaffold.

Inspections are required:

- Before first use
- After substantial alterations
- After any event likely to have affected its stability
- If the tower remains erected in the same place for more than seven days.

Any faults should be put right before further use.

Consideration should be given to whether the area around the base of the tower needs to be a designated hardhat area.

Only the minimum amount of equipment and materials may be stored or used on the working platform.

Barriers must be erected at ground level to prevent people walking into the tower.

If the scaffolding is to remain in position unattended, unauthorised access to it must be prevented by removing or boarding over the access ladder.

Managers must ensure that all work at height is planned, organised and carried out by competent persons and that the hierarchy for managing risk for work at height is being followed. Duty holders must ensure that the most appropriate work equipment is used and that collective measures to prevent falls (such as guardrails and working platforms) are in place before any measures which may only mitigate the distance and consequences of a fall (such as nets), or which may only provide personal protection from a fall. Risk assessments must be committed to writing.

Work Equipment

All dangerous parts of machinery shall be adequately safeguarded. A machinery inventory shall be drawn up to identify machines/equipment with dangerous parts together with associated safeguards. Regular inspections and tests of safeguards and emergency stop devices and regular maintenance shall be carried out each term and recorded.

Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations

'Work equipment' includes items such as milling machines, woodworking machinery, lawn mowers, overhead projectors, ladders, laboratory apparatus, portable drills, soldering irons and catering equipment. Work equipment also covers any equipment provided by employees themselves for use at work.

Managers and Heads of department must:

- Ensure that the equipment is suitable for the job it has to do
- Take into account the working conditions and hazards in the workplace when assessing the suitability of and selecting the equipment
- Ensure equipment is used only for operations for which, and under conditions for which, it is suitable
- Ensure that equipment is inspected regularly and maintained in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair

- Give adequate information, instruction and training to users

The equipment must have:

- Protection on dangerous parts
- Protection against specified hazards occurring such as operator falls, falling and ejected articles and substances, ruptures or disintegration of work equipment parts, equipment catching fire or overheating, unintentional or premature discharge of articles and substances, explosions
- Protection on parts and substances at high or very low temperatures
- Control systems and control devices
- A means of isolation

Plus there must be good lighting, maintenance operations and warning markings. New equipment must comply with an appropriate British or CEN Standards.

Managers in control of work equipment must assess the risks posed by the use of work equipment under their control and commit the assessments to writing.

Links with other policy areas

Health and Safety Policy

VERSION CONTROL SHEET

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Policy Prepared by: Richard Budd

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