



Working at height

Working at Height

Work above 2m used to be considered the height from which persons should be protected from falling. However, statistics show that many major injuries result from falls from heights of less than 2m. Thus, working at height is any work where a person could fall a distance liable to cause injury — no minimum height is specified. A height is classified as anything above floor level.



Working at height includes:

- using ladders
- stepladders
- MEWP (mobile elevated working platforms)
- roof working

What are the Hazards?

Hazards that should be considered include those that might be present for people who are not directly involved in the work.

There are four main types of hazard associated with work at height:

- falls of persons
- falling objects
- falls from collapsing structures
- access to normally inaccessible hazards (e.g. overhead power cables).

The nature and range of the hazards will depend on the location and work activity.

Whether a fall is liable to cause injury may depend on:

- dangers associated with falling onto or into material below





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- dangers associated with passing traffic
- whether there is rough or uneven ground
- the type of structure and its security.

Typical hazards include:

- projecting steel for concrete reinforcement, rails or posts
- dangerous materials, e.g. grain silos, corrosive liquids
- fittings dropped from a scaffold during construction
- badly stacked materials falling from a work platform
- rubbish thrown into a skip that is at ground level
- contact with machinery that was considered safe by position
- exposure to extreme weather conditions
- poor design or use of suspended access cradles
- traffic impact with scaffolds, scaffold towers or elevating platforms.

What are the Risks?

Falls from height are consistently a major cause of fatal and serious injuries in all

industries. HSE statistics show that falls from height account for one in every four fatalities. 60% of all major injuries resulted from falls from a height of less than 2m.

There are other risks associated with working at height which are not injuries from falls e.g. carrying ladders and these must be included in the assessment of risks associated with working at height.

In order to avoid or minimise the need for work at height, Risk Assessments must be completed and must cover:

- the planning of the work activity
- risks identified
- who may be affected by the work activity
- what arrangements have been put in place to control the risks and are these adequate



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