

HR & OD POLICIES

HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

Work at Height Guidance



Aberdeenshire
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WORK AT HEIGHT GUIDANCE

The Work at Height Regulations (WAH) applies to all work at height where there is a risk of a fall likely to cause personal injury.

WHAT IS 'WORK AT HEIGHT'?

A place is 'at height' if 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 does not include travelling to or from a place of work.

Examples of work at height include:

- Using work platforms such as scaffolds, cherry pickers and scissor lifts;
- Work on a roof, piece of plant, or equipment;
- Using ladders or stepladders; and
- Edge of excavations.



WHAT PRECAUTIONS DO YOU NEED TO TAKE?

Remember, work at height may be one off, or routine. Ensure you identify all tasks, which require work at height, so you can make sure they are carried out safely.

The key to preventing injury from work at height is to carry out a risk assessment (an example risk assessment can be found later in this document), so you can choose the right control measures. This is a simple process, answering the following questions will help you to do this.

What you have to do

You will need to look at the task in order to carry out a risk assessment. When looking at the task you should consider:

The task:

What work needs to be done?

Location:

Where is the work to be done? What is the work surface? Is it a fragile roof (such as a skylight or asbestos cement roof)?

Distance to be climbed:

Portable ladders are less suitable for higher climbs, especially if loads are carried. Where reasonably practicable; temporary stairs or scaffold towers with internal stairs, rather than portable ladders, should be used.

Duration and frequency of use:

Longer duration or regular jobs generally justify a better standard of fall protection, i.e. a tower scaffold or cherry picker rather than a ladder. A ladder/stepladder may be suitable for short duration tasks i.e. replacing a light bulb when building a tower scaffold would not be reasonable because the task only takes a few minutes. Installing several rows of light bulbs may justify the use of a tower scaffold because the task takes longer.

Distance and effects of a potential fall:

If a fall arrest system is to be used, you must make sure there is enough clearance for it to deploy, so the user does not hit an obstruction or the ground before the fall is stopped. If nets or airbags are used they should be located as close as possible to the working level (as they do not work as effectively if the distance is too great).

Evacuation and rescue:

If a fall arrest system is used, you must make sure a rescue can be carried out if a worker is left suspended.

When selecting work equipment look at all the risks, not just those associated with the 'use' phase; i.e. it may take two or more people to assemble a tower scaffold to get onto a roof and install temporary edge protection, whereas the repair may need only one person on the roof – putting several people at risk so one can work safely! A better solution, in this scenario, may be to use a cherry picker, so one person can perform the task safely from the working platform – this avoids others being put at risk during the setting up and dismantling stages.

How do you decide what equipment to use?

You need to make sure you give collective protection measures over personal protection measures.

Collective protection:

Equipment which can protect more than one person and, once properly installed, does not require any action by them to make sure it works. (An example would be a cherry picker with guard rails.)

Personal protection:

Equipment which protects only the user/wearer and requires action by the individual, such as properly wearing and adjusting it, for it to work. (An example would be fall arrest equipment.)

The table below shows which equipment provides collective or personal protection and if it prevents or just minimises the risk of serious injury. Where reasonably practicable, always give priority to using equipment which provides collective prevention – shown in the shaded box.

	Collective	Personal
Work equipment that prevents a fall.	Guard rails, scaffolding, tower scaffolds, cherry pickers, scissor lifts.	Work restraint.
Work equipment that minimises the effects of a fall.	Airbags, safety nets.	Fall arrest.
Work equipment that neither prevents or mitigates a fall.	Ladders, stepladders, kick stools.	

What else you need to do

- Make sure that the people who select, assemble, use and supervise the equipment are all competent.
- Make sure that the equipment is regularly inspected and maintained by competent people.

Remember:

Where work at height is necessary you need to justify the reason for selecting the access equipment (compared to other access equipment options). You do this by using a risk assessment and the hierarchy of controls.

The WAH set out a simple hierarchy for managing and selecting equipment for work at height.

Can you avoid the need to work at height to carry out the task?

Long handled tools or other equipment can sometimes be used to safely carry out a task from ground level, e.g. an extending roller for painting. Think about whether it is possible to design out the need to work at height.

If you can't avoid the need to work at height, you must try to make sure the risk of a fall is prevented.

If you can't avoid working at height, what control measures can prevent a fall?

You can do this by fitting a roof with permanent guard rails or a parapet around the edges; or a piece of plant or equipment that has fixed permanent guard rails around it. Using work equipment; if you can't use an existing place of work, consider whether you can use work equipment to prevent people falling. Tower scaffolds, cherry pickers and scissor lifts are some common examples of work equipment, which will achieve this because working platforms have guard rails. If regular access is required, e.g. to an air conditioning unit on a roof, it may be reasonable to create a safe place of work by installing permanent guard rails to and around the work area.

Can you minimise the effects of a fall?

If you can't put measures in place to prevent a fall, you must try to limit the risk by minimising the distance and/or consequences of a fall.

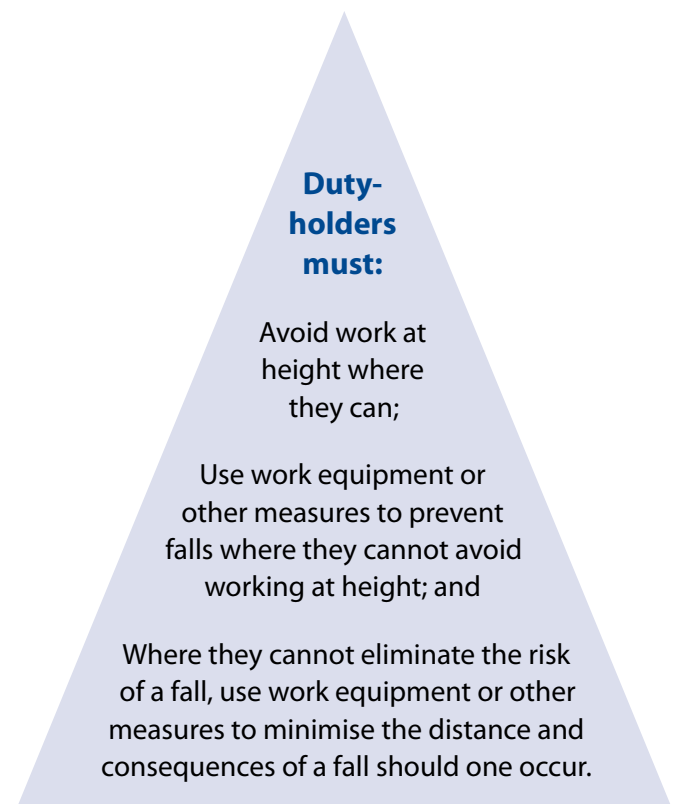
Airbags and safety nets are examples of such measures, because they should minimise the risk of injury if someone falls. Fall arrest

equipment will also minimise the risk of injury if someone falls, providing the equipment is set up correctly, users know how to look after it and they understand its limitations.

What other additional measures do you need to take to reduce the risk of a fall?

When using any equipment for work at height, you also need to make sure:

- The people using it are trained to use it safely;
- It is regularly inspected and well maintained; and
- The work is supervised to check people are working safely.



Normal use of ladders/step ladders does not provide measures which either prevent falls or minimise the consequences. So you must be able to show that it was not reasonable to select alternative equipment because the task is low risk and short duration.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

The Work at Height Regulations 2005 (as amended) – A brief guide INDG401(rev1)
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg401.pdf>

www.hse.gov.uk/falls

[Aberdeenshire Council Risk Assessment Guidance and Forms](#)

For further advice and guidance please contact the Council's [Health and Safety](#) unit on 01224 664118.

Policy

Revision Date	Previous Revision Date	Summary of Changes
01-03-2012	-	Creation of all Documents

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