

WORKING AT HEIGHT PROCEDURE

Policy Group: Health and Safety

Effective: **1st** May 2019

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Performance and Development

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Next renew due: May 2020

Ref no.: 2.1.4

GUIDANCE

Values | Vision | Tone of Voice

Values



Vision

Transforming lives through learning

Tone of voice

Our tone of voice takes its direct influence from our core values.

We are passionate about people and learners and are driven to get the best out of everyone by getting to understand them. We are caring and supportive, as well as being determined and strive for growth. We talk with purpose and enthusiasm in a way that connects and empowers people.

Innovation is at the heart of Learning Curve Group and we're always thinking about what's next!

SUMMARY CHANGES

Date	Page	Details of amendments

I. INTRODUCTION

This procedure forms part of our Health and Safety Management System and should be read alongside the Health and Safety Policy, it is designed to provide a safe and healthy working environment for colleagues, including specific measures to protect your health and safety when working at height. This procedure outlines the specific arrangements for all work at height activities carried out colleagues across the company.

It applies to any work at height taking place in premises under our control (including access and egress to such a place) where a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal injury. This includes any place at or below ground level.

The majority of the work within the company which constitutes 'working at height' is at a low level and is low to medium risk e.g. changing low level light bulbs. It is a frequently occurring activity and the majority of work in this category can usually be managed by simple measures e.g. using small stepladders. (It should **NOT** be done by climbing on chairs etc.).

Applies to:

It is applicable to all colleagues, learners and subcontractors, owned/leased sites and work areas and all associated work activities and must be complied with.

Reason for procedure:

This procedure is in accordance with the Working at Height Regulations 2005 and all other relevant legislation, and it applies to all our sites and activities.

II. PROCEDURE

Do not start work at height until you have properly planned the work and assessed and controlled the risks involved.

You should not carry out any work at height unless it has been properly planned (this includes planning for emergencies and, where relevant, the selection of work equipment), risk assessed in accordance with the working at height principles and suitable control measures are in place.

Where reasonable, work at height on or near a fragile surface should be avoided. If work on or near a fragile roof is unavoidable, suitable working platforms, coverings, guard rails, and prominent warning notices must be provided, and equipment selected to minimise the distance and consequence of a fall where risk cannot be eliminated. You must be able to get safely to and from the place where they are working at height.

You must ensure that all equipment provided for work at height is well maintained and regularly inspected. Ladders and stepladders must be inspected on a regular basis and a user check carried out before use. All inspections should be documented using HSF 2.131 Ladder or Stepladder inspection form be carried out by a competent person and the results of inspections must recorded and retained.

Process for Safe Working at Height

This information should be used to identify when people are working at height and the issues to consider:

What is Working at Height?

Work at height means work in any place where, if precautions were not taken, you could fall and injure themselves e.g. if you work above ground level you could fall from an edge, through an opening or fragile surface, or you could fall from ground level into an opening in a floor or hole in the ground.

Examples of working at height include:

- using working platforms such as scaffolds, tower scaffolds, cherry pickers, scissor lifts and podium steps;
- working on a roof, piece of plant or equipment;
- using ladders or stepladders.

What Precautions need to be taken?

Work at height may be a one-off activity or a routine daily activity, any risk assessment must identify all tasks which require work at height, to ensure they are carried out safely. This is a simple process that will be helped by answering the following questions:

1. Can the need to work at height be avoided in the first place?

Long-handled tools or other equipment can sometimes be used to safely carry out a task from ground level, e.g. a long-handled brush or roller for painting and water-fed poles with brushes for window cleaning. Think about whether it is possible to design out the need to work at height, e.g. could new or replacement services, such as pipes or IT cables, be put at ground level?

If the need to work at height can't be avoided, the risk of a fall should be prevented.

2. Can a Fall be Prevented?

This can be done by:

- using an existing place of work e.g. a place that is already safe, (a roof with a permanent guard rail 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 an existing place of work cannot be used, consider the use of work equipment to prevent people falling e.g. tower scaffolds, podium steps, cherry pickers and scissor lifts are some common examples of work equipment which will do this.

If measures cannot be put in place to prevent a fall, the risk should be limited by minimising the distance and/or consequences of a fall.

3. Minimising the Consequences of a Fall

The risk assessment should aim to avoid and then prevent a fall before using measures that will only minimise or limit the consequences of the fall e.g. fall arrest equipment. Any equipment used to minimise the consequences will only work providing the equipment is set up correctly, you know how to look after it and understand its limitations.

4. Other Additional Measures to Reduce the Risk of a Fall

When using any work at height equipment, it is important to ensure:

- the people using it are trained to use it safely;
- It is suitable for the task;
- it is regularly inspected and well maintained, and;
- the work is supervised to check people are working safely

Identification of Any Fragile Surfaces

It is important to be particularly aware of fragile materials when you are working at height as their presence in, or near the working area, increases the risk. A fragile surface is one which would be liable to break if you put weight onto it. Common examples include, fibre and asbestos cement roof sheets and many skylights, but can also include materials which have deteriorated over time e.g. weather damaged or brittle materials like some plastics and flat roof areas. It is important to:

- avoid the need to work on, near or pass across them by, e.g. 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 or 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 equipment.

Ensuring a Stepladder/ladder is safe

You must establish that the equipment is in a safe condition prior to using it. As a guide only use equipment that:

- Has no visible defects, they should have a pre-use check every time they are used;
- Has a current detailed visual inspection as per the manufacturer's instructions;
- Is suitable for the work being carried out;
- Has been stored in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Ensuring User Competence

A stepladder or ladder should only be used when a risk assessment has determined that it is the most practical and safest solution. You must also ensure:

- The equipment is long enough to safely reach the work area - For stepladders you must not use the top two steps, unless there is a suitable handrail available. For ladders do not use the top 3 rungs and if they are being used for access, they should project at least 1 m (3 rungs) above the work platform and be tied off.
- The stepladder or ladder rungs must be level;
- The weather is suitable for work at height – do not use them in strong or gusting winds;
- The user is wearing robust, sensible shoes that are clean and free from mud and dirt.

On a stepladder or ladders you must not:

- Move them while standing on the rungs or steps
- Slide down the stiles
- Stand them on moveable objects such as pallets, bricks, tower scaffolds etc.
- Extend a ladder while standing on the rungs.

Pre-Use Checks

The following gives you an overview of what to look for prior to using any stepladder or ladder. These checks must be carried out prior to use and be documented as part of the risk assessment. To document this you can use HSF 2.1.41 Ladder or Step Ladder inspection form.

Stepladders:

Check the locking bars – Do not use the stepladder if the bars are bent or the fixings are worn or damaged as the ladder could collapse.

Check the feet – Do not use the equipment if the feet are missing or worn or damaged as it could slip.

Check the stepladder platform – Do not use the equipment if the platform is split or buckled, it could be unstable or collapse.

Check the steps/treads – Do not use the steps if the treads are contaminated or dirty as they could be slippery – they should be cleaned if possible first and allowed to dry before use.

Check the steps for strength and stability – Do not use the equipment if the steps are loose as they could collapse.

Check the stiles – Do not use the stepladder if the stiles are bent or damaged as they could collapse.

Ladders:

Stiles need to be in good condition – Do not use the ladder if the stiles are bent or split as the ladder could collapse.

Check the feet – Do not use the ladder if the feet are damaged, missing or worn as the ladder could slip.

Check the rungs – Do not use the ladder if the rungs are missing, bent or loose as the ladder could become unstable.

Equipment Guidance

General guidance for use of stepladders and ladders;

Stepladders

As a guide, stepladders should only be used:

- for short duration works (in one position for no more than 30 minutes);
- Where a handhold is available on the stepladder;
- Where you can maintain 3 points of contact (hands and feet) at the working position;
- On firm, level and clean ground/surfaces.
- In a position where they will not be struck by doors, vehicles or windows – where this isn't possible they should be protected by warning cones or a second person stationed on the ground in the working area (to warn others of their position)
- For work that imposes a side loading, such as side-on drilling through solid materials (e.g. bricks or concrete), by having the steps facing the work activity. Where side-on loadings cannot be avoided you should prevent the steps from tipping over, e.g. by tying the steps to a suitably high point. If this isn't possible a more suitable type of access equipment should be used.

Ladders

The following should be observed when using or working from ladders:

- When you are only carrying light materials and tools – read the manufacturers' labels on the ladder and assess the risks. DO NOT exceed any manufacturers' safe working loads;
- Don't overreach – make sure your belt buckle (navel) stays within the stiles;
- Make sure the ladder angle is at 75° – you should use the 1 in 4 rule e.g. 1 unit out for every 4 units up;
- Always grip the ladder and face the ladder rungs while climbing or descending it;
- Avoid holding items when climbing or descending (consider using a tool belt);

- Don't work within 6m horizontally of any overhead power line, unless it has been made dead or it is protected with insulation and you must use a non-conductive ladder e.g. fibreglass or timber for any electrical work;
- Where you cannot maintain a handhold, other than for a brief period e.g. to hold a nail while starting to knock it in, starting a screw etc., you will need to take other measures to prevent a fall or reduce the consequences if one happened;
- For a leaning ladder, you should secure it e.g. by tying the ladder to prevent it from slipping (either outwards or sideways) and have a strong upper resting point, e.g. do not rest a ladder against weak upper surfaces e.g. glazing or plastic gutters

Can you **AVOID** working at height in the first place?
If no go to **PREVENT**

Can you **PREVENT** a fall from occurring?
If not go to **MINIMISE**

Can you **MINIMISE** the distance and/or consequences of a fall?

Using ladders and stepladders

Do as much work as possible from the ground.

Some practical examples include:

- using extendable tools from ground level to remove the need to climb a ladder
- installing cables at ground level
- lowering a lighting mast to ground level
- ground level assembly of edge protection

You can do this by:

- using an existing place of work that is already safe, e.g. a non-fragile roof with a permanent perimeter guard rail

or, if not

- using work equipment to prevent people from falling

Some practical examples of collective protection when using an existing place of work:

- a concrete flat roof with existing edge protection, or guarded mezzanine floor,
- or plant or machinery with fixed guard rails around it

Some practical examples of collective protection using work equipment to prevent a fall:

- mobile elevating work platforms (MEWPs) such as scissor lifts, scaffolds/tower scaffolds

An example of personal protection using work equipment to prevent a fall:

- using a work restraint (travel restriction) system that prevents a worker getting into a fall position

If the risk of a person falling remains, you must take sufficient measures to minimize the distance and/or consequences of a fall.

Practical examples of collective protection using work equipment to minimize the distance and consequences of a fall:

- Safety nets and soft-landing systems, e.g. air bags, installed close to the level of work

An example of personal protection used to minimize the distance and consequences of a fall:

- Industrial rope access e.g. working on a building façade
- Fall-arrest system using a high anchor point

For tasks of low risk and short duration, ladders and stepladders can be a sensible and practical option.

If your risk assessment determines it is correct to use a ladder, you should

MINIMISE the risk by making sure workers:

- Use the right type of equipment for the job
- Are competent (you can provide adequate training and/or supervision to help)
- Use the equipment provided safely and follow a safe system of work
- Are fully aware of the risks **and** measures to help control them.

III. DEFINITIONS

Term	Explanation
Fragile Surface	A surface, which would be liable to fail if any reasonably foreseeable loading were to be applied to it
Competent Person	Someone who has sufficient training and experience or knowledge and other qualities that allow them to carry out the task safely. The level of competence required will depend on the complexity of the situation and the particular help you need.
Responsible Manager	The senior person responsible for an office or site which includes Centre Managers and Business Directors

IV. RELATED POLICIES

HSP 2.1 Health and Safety Policy

Appendix

The following form is available on our internal 'S' Drive in the health and safety folder.

HSF 2.1.41 Ladder or Step Ladder inspection form