

Independent Guide

Working from height - what do I need to know?



Independent workplace compliance

Introduction

Working at height continues to be one of the biggest causes of fatality or major injury. Working from height takes place in many varied environments and for a variety of reasons. The Work at Height Regulations state that "you must do all that is reasonably practicable to prevent anyone falling". To do this you should avoid working at height where possible; use work equipment or other measures to prevent falls; and, where working from height cannot be avoided and where risk cannot be eliminated, use work equipment or other measures to minimise the distance and consequences of any fall.

Legislation

The piece of legislation covering working from height is the Work at Height Regulations 2005. The Work at Height Regulations 2005 applies to all work at height where there is a risk of a fall, liable to cause personal injury. They place duties on employers, the self-employed, and any person who controls the work of others (e.g. facilities managers or building owners who may contract others to work at height) to the extent they control the work.

What is work from height?

Work at height means work in any place where, if precautions were not taken, a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal injury. You are working at height if you:

- Work above ground/floor level;
- Could fall from an edge, through an opening or fragile surface or; and
- Could fall from ground level into an opening in a floor or a hole in the ground.

Why is it so important?

Falls from height are a major cause of injuries at work. In many cases, work at height is a 'one off', or incidental to the main job to be done. This means that people often do not recognise the risks and so do not take the precautions they need to, to work safely.

Falling from height is the most common cause of workplace deaths. Whereas some work at height (gutter cleaning, roof work, window cleaning) is obvious, other tasks, such as putting up displays, machine maintenance and unloading vehicles may also need consideration.

What do I need to do?

Employers must ensure that work is properly planned, supervised and carried out by competent people. Training is essential to enable the correct selection of access equipment and knowledge to use and check it.

The key messages from the HSE are:

- Avoid work at height where you can
- Prevent falls working from an existing safe place of work or the right type of access equipment
- Minimise the distance and consequences of a fall.

This guide is of a general nature; specific advice can be obtained from Assurity Consulting. Assurity Consulting is the UK's leading independent compliance consultancy specialising in workplace health, safety and environmental solutions. We have over 30 years' experience of helping customers of all sizes, from across all sectors, manage their compliance responsibilities, making sure that their organisation is compliant, their employees are safe, their processes are cost effective and their management team is in control.



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