Working at Height Assessment Standards

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1. Introduction

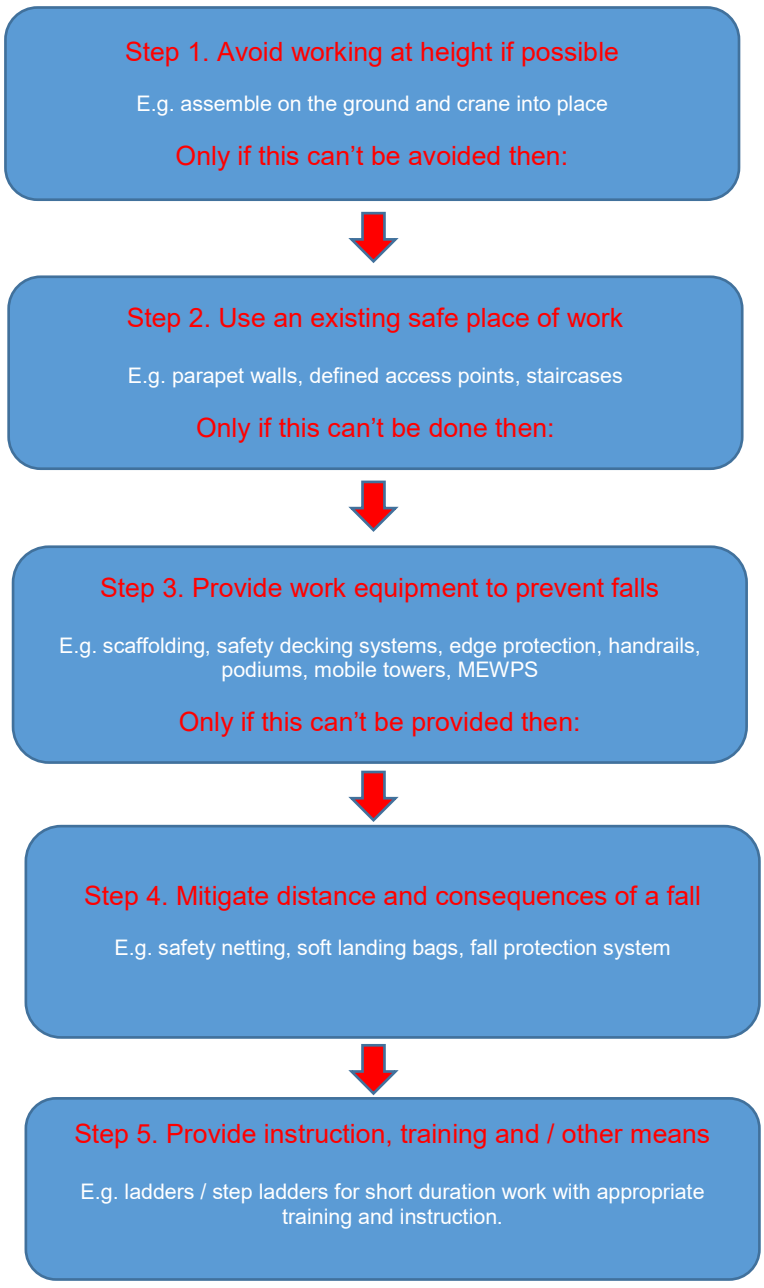
The purpose of these working at height (W@H) assessment standards is to ensure all of our workforce are protected so far as reasonably practicable from falls from height. Falls from height are one of the biggest causes of workplace fatalities and major injuries.

W@H means work in any place, if there were no precautions in place, a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal injury. A fall from height can be from an elevated platform or down into an unguarded excavation.

W@H is one of the most common hazards on construction sites and must be planned, risk assessed and supervised. Any W@H must be carried out by competent people.

2. Hierarchy for working at height

When assessing risk or developing a safe system of work the hierarchy for working at height must be followed:



3. Working at height procedure

Prior to construction projects commencing the Contract Manager for the project must complete a W@H assessment for the types of homes that will be constructed; this document is approved by the relevant Director named on the Directors Responsibility Chart, usually the Construction Director.
Refer to HSMS Guidance – W@H Assessment

For each step, it must be considered what is reasonably practicable and 'collective protection' such as scaffold and safety decking systems should be used before 'personal protection' such as fall protection systems. Each plot must have a W@H registers folder where all the relevant inspection registers are kept.

For manufacturing operations, the hazard of W@H height must be considered and appropriately risk assessed for all activities that requires W@H.

For office operations, the hazard of W@H must be considered and appropriately risk assessed in the office risk assessment. Office/ sales personnel must not be tempted to climb onto desks or chairs to change things like light bulbs. A trained operative must be employed, using the correct means of accessing height following a risk assessment process.

Customer Care Operatives must also undertake a risk assessment of all work they undertake at height and ensure they follow the Ladders and Stepladders Standards.

If an electric storm is forecast or appears to be manifesting all outside working at height must cease to prevent any one being struck by lightning.

4. Fall prevention measures, equipment and their uses

4.1 Excavations

All excavations must be fenced off to prevent persons from falling into them; deep excavations must have a suitable means of access and egress.
Refer to Excavations Standards.

4.2 Hop ups/ low level working platforms

Hop ups are small steps that operatives can use to gain access to height usually inside of a plot. They should be no more than 500mm high. Operatives using hop ups must ensure that they follow the manufacturer's instructions when setting them up. Hop ups should not be used on scaffold unless additional guardrails have been installed.

4.3 Ladders and Stepladders

Ladders and stepladders can be used for work at height; however they are for short duration tasks and a risk assessment must be carried out.
Refer to Ladder and Stepladders Standards.

4.4 Mobile access towers and platforms

Mobile towers are usually used for out of sequence or repair work or used when it is not practicable to install a scaffold. The mobile tower must be constructed by a trained operative who has an appropriate Prefabricated Access Suppliers and Manufactures Association (PASMA) level of qualification.
Refer to Mobile Access Towers and Platforms Standards.

4.5 Mobile elevating work platforms (MEWPS)

A MEWP is usually used for out of sequence or repair work. The correct MEWP must be selected for the job in hand, the MEWP must be operated by a trained operative that holds an appropriate International Powered Access Federation (IPAF) level of qualification. Each person in the basket or cradle of the MEWP must wear a harness and this must be clipped onto the strong point (unless working over water).
Refer to MEWPS Standards.

4.6 Podiums

Podiums are a safer alternative than using stepladders, they have a guard rail that protects the user from falling. They can be used to gain access to high ceilings in apartment blocks. If they need to be assembled they should be assembled as per the manufacturer's instruction by a PASMA trained operative.

4.7 Roofs (working on)

Working on roofs is a significant hazard which must only be done my competent operatives following a safe system of work after being fully risk assessed by site management and contractors.
Refer to Roofs Standards.

4.8 Safety decking systems

Safety decking systems are installed internally in plots. They are used when installing joists, floors, roof trusses and roofs. The safety decking system must only be installed and removed by trained and competent operatives. The safety decking system must also be inspected by a trained Site Manager every 7 days.
Refer to Safety Decking Systems Standards.

4.9 Scaffold (tube and fitting, system)

These will form the most common safe working platforms for brickwork and timber frame erection, they must be designed or constructed in accordance with the National Access & Scaffolding Confederation TG20 specifications. Scaffold can be used around the outside of the plot/garage under construction as a safe working platform. Scaffold can also be used as a platform to work from for garden and retaining walls. Tube and fitting and system scaffold must only be erected by trained and competent operatives. The scaffolding must also be inspected by a trained Site Manager every 7 days.
Refer to Scaffold Standards.

4.10 Soft landing bags systems

Soft landing bags systems must not be routinely used as a control measure for mitigating the consequence of a fall. There may however be limited situations where it is appropriate to use soft landing bags and this must be identified by the W@H assessment. There must also be a risk assessment in place to identify the specific control measures required when using soft landing bags. The local Group HS&E Advisor must be consulted if soft landing bags are to be used.
Refer to Soft Landing Bags Standards.

4.11 Stairwells (working in and around)

Stairwells are a significant hazard and must be protected by covering them over prior to the stairs being fitted. Prior to opening the stairwell up to fit the stairs they must be protected by a proprietary stairwell edge protection system and the carpenters must be trained to fit this. If the property is three stories or more then the stairwell below the flight of stairs that is being installed must be covered over prior to fitting the staircase in order to prevent a fall. When operatives are required to work over the stairwell the oxford landing system or equivalent must be used, this must be fitted by a trained operative.
Refer to Stairwell Standards.

4.12 Trestles (low level)

These can be used on site up to a height of 600mm and must be welded in order that they cannot be extended above 600mm, they must be fitted by trained operatives and approved by site management. Low level trestles can be used at ground level as a low level working platform for bricklayers. They can also be used internally to get the internal block work up to joist or ceiling height. Low level trestles are a good solution when building garden walls or retaining walls.
Refer to Trestles Standards.

5. Monitoring

Site management must continually monitor any working at height on site.

Site management must ensure that all W@H assessments and control measures for W@H are checked weekly and that the findings are entered on to the site manager's weekly check list.

Refer to HSMS form 014 – Site Weekly Checklist.

The Group HS&E department will monitor compliance of these standards and inspect work at height documentation during routine HS&E inspections.

6. Further reading

https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/safetytopics/workingatheight.htm

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