STOP THE DROP - PLANNING

Planning Working at Height

Work at height should be planned in advance with careful consideration given to the selection and use of work equipment. The distance a person or object can fall is likely to affect the severity of any injury that may be caused. Where working at height cannot be avoided altogether, the first consideration should be to ensure there is adequate protective measures in place to prevent a fall and then, in the event of a fall, to reduce the distance and outcome.

Low-risk, relatively straightforward tasks may require less effort when it comes to planning. Employers and those in control must first assess the risks.

When planning the work at height task, the controls should be applied in an order that maximises effectiveness as follows:

Most effective

Least effective

1. Avoid work at height
2. Choose the safest equipment for the job
3. Use work equipment to prevent falls
    - Collective measures
    - Personal measures
4. Training and safe work methods
5. Use work equipment to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall

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1. Methods of avoiding work at height risks

   Avoiding the work at height is the best solution. Ideas on how to do this include:

   - Modifying the work method eg Painting a tall part of a structure from the ground using an extended paint roller
   - Modifying the design: erecting guardrails at ground level before lifting to height

2. Choose the right equipment

   Provide the most suitable equipment appropriate for the work ; take account of factors such as:

   - the working conditions (eg floor stability, weather);
   - the nature, frequency and duration of the work;
   - the number of users
   - the space available on site and the risks to the safety of everyone where the work equipment will be used.
   - the emergency and rescue procedures required

   See equipment selection flow chart

   Take account of the risk assessment for the task to be completed.

3. Use work equipment to prevent falls

   Measures that protect more than one person are preferred over individual measures, where possible. eg a toe board or guard rail that will provide a protective barrier.

   An example of measures that protects the individual are a harness with a short lanyard which makes it impossible for a person to get to a fall position (known as a fall restraint system) which creates a travel restriction).

4. Training and safe work methods

   Training should be provided to workers to ensure they have the right level of understanding in all aspects of work at height related to the equipment being used.

   Safe work factors include:

   - The levels of supervision.
   - Manufacturer's instructions: Using the equipment properly and in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions
   - Work scheduling: The amount of time spent working at height should be carefully considered, taking into account the nature of the task.

- Weather conditions: In adverse weather such as icy, rainy or windy conditions, the level of risk increases and the work should be reviewed to determine the approach to ensure safe work practices are possible.
- Falling materials: Objects falling from height can cause considerable damage to people and property.
  The objects may be:
    - Equipment or tools that have been dropped
    - Waste items such as pieces of stand materials
    - Items being hung at a height such as banners

5. Personal protection

When using personal fall protection equipment, a full body harness should be worn if there is a risk of falling.

A full body harness consists of straps passed over the shoulders, across the chest, and around the legs. In a fall, a full body harness protects the individual, distributing the force of impact over the body.