

# Working at Height and Prevention of Falls HS 10.41



## 1 Who needs to read this?

Corporate Service Managers who engage contractors to work at height and anyone who is planning to work at height to ensure that the control, safe use and maintenance of access equipment is considered in the risk assessment.

## 2 What is this about?

This document aims to provide understanding in how to identify what constitutes working at height and to manage the risks associated.

This guidance is divided into separate sections with more detailed information in each they are:

- General guidance
- Permanent structures
- Roofs
- Temporary access
- Subterranean
- Window cleaning

## 3 What do I need to know and do?

### 3.1 General guidance

All personnel working at Post including those working on behalf of Post should follow this guidance.

Planning any work is essential and the duty holder (any person or organization holding a legal duty of care) shall attempt to initially remove the hazard and the risk where possible.

Questions to ask are:

Can you AVOID working at height?

Do as much work as possible from the ground:

- Using extendable tools from ground level to remove the need to climb a ladder (window cleaning pole)
- Installing cables at ground level (behind skirting boards, under suspended floors)
- Lowering a lighting mast to ground level
- Ground level assembly of edge protection



It is more cost effective to have collective fall prevention than to have personal fall prevention

If NO then go to PREVENT

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Can you PREVENT a fall from occurring?

Collective protection is equipment that does not require the person working at height to act to be effective for example a permanent guard

Using work equipment to prevent people from falling

Using **collective fall protection** such as:

- A concrete roof with existing edge protection, or
- Guarded mezzanine floor, or
- Plant or machinery with fixed guard rails around it



Installed collective fall protection

Using work equipment that provides **collective fall protection** such as:

- Mobile elevating work platforms (MEWPS) such as scissor lifts, buckets on a telescopic arm
- Tower scaffolds
- Scaffolds

Personal protection is equipment that requires the individual to act to be effective, such as putting on a safety harness correctly and connecting it via an energy-absorbing lanyard to a suitable anchor point

Using personal protection equipment:

Using a work restraint (travel restriction) system that prevents a worker from getting into a fall position

If NO go to MINIMISE

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

## Collective protection

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

Personal protection

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



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Particular care should be taken of the following:

## Overhead power lines

Personnel must not carry out work where they or any equipment are within:

- 7m of 400kV and 275kV lines,
- 6m of 132kV line
- 3m of 11kV and 33kV lines
- 1m of any low voltage line

Exclusion zones should be established around the line, for more detailed information refer to the Energy Networks Association (ENA) publication 'Look Out Look Up! A guide to the Safer Use of Mechanical Plant in the vicinity of Electricity Overhead Lines', or HSE GS6 Avoiding danger from overhead power lines.

## Water

If working near or above water further guidance shall be sought from the TWO or your FM Provider.

## Equipment

All equipment shall be checked before use and inspected according the manufacturer's recommendations

### 3.2 Permanent structures

For permanent structures the following standards should apply:

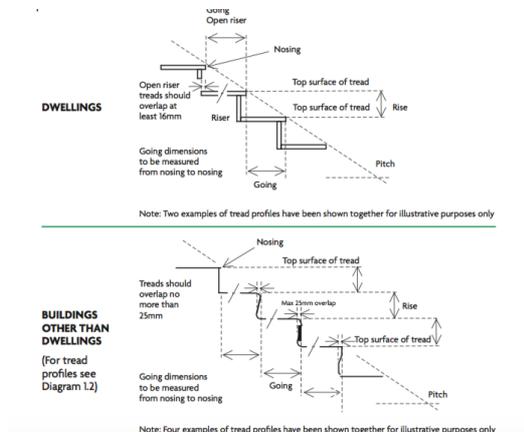
- For stairs, landings, ramps and internal edges on floors in single family homes edge protection must be at a minimum height of 900mm
- For external balconies including Juliette balconies and edges of roof the minimum height is 1100mm
- Windows below 800mm of finished floor level that can be opened shall be safely restricted or edge protection provided to 800 from the finished floor level
- Where there are children under 5 years of age during normal use ensure that a 100mm sphere cannot pass through the guarding
- Stairs should have level even treads and sensible size risers and goings.

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From Building Regulations Part K



- In residential accommodation the minimum and maximum:
  - For risers is 150mm to 220mm
  - For goings is 220mm to 300mm
- The maximum pitch for a private stair is 42°
- Stairs that have open risers in residential accommodation shall be designed so that you cannot pass a 100mm sphere through the open risers
- For other buildings the minimum and maximum:
  - For risers is 150mm to 190mm
  - For goings is 250mm to 400mm
- For general access stairs the minimum and maximum:
  - For risers is 150mm to 170mm
  - For goings is 250mm to 400mm
- Make step nosings apparent by using a contrasting material in a strip a minimum of 50mm to 65mm wide on the tread and 35mm to 55mm on the riser
- Stairs shall have one handrail, if more than 1 metre wide there should be a handrail either side. If the stairs are more than 2 metres wide it should be divided into flights a minimum of 1 metre wide
- Guarding on stairs and balconies shall be designed so that children cannot climb them i.e. horizontal rails are not acceptable.

For more detailed information consult your TWO or FM Provider.

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## 3.3 Roofs

Access and fall protection requirements for roofs shall be based on risk assessment principles e.g. the frequency and duration that a person needs to be on a normal pitched roof, may mean that installing any kind of fall prevention equipment is not justified. However, the flat roof of an office which houses plant and equipment that requires frequent inspection/maintenance shall have:

- Safe means of access
- Dedicated walkways with a handrail and mid rail
- Parapet wall and/or a 'work restraint system' which may include a lanyard which can be adjusted, or set, to a fixed length to prevent the user physically getting to a place where they could fall
- Highlighted hazardous areas (e.g. roof lights, glass, rotted chipboard, non reinforced fibre cement sheets, corroded metal sheets) and non walk areas with visual warnings
- Plan and equipment sited 2m away from roof lights and 4m away from roof edge

If the building lacks these safety features then contact your TWO or FM Provider. Consideration shall also be given to:

- The prevention of objects falling from work areas at height
- Weather conditions
- Access
- An emergency plan in case of fire
- A plan for rescue

## 3.4 Temporary Access

There are many types of temporary access equipment for example: trestles, scaffolds, mobile elevated work platforms (MEWPS) and ladders. Post should contact their TWO or FM Provider for detailed advice on selecting and the use of these types of equipment.

### 3.4.1 Ladders

Ladders can be used for work at height when the risk assessment shows that using equipment offering a higher level of fall protection is not justified because of the low risk and short duration of use, or there are existing workplace features which cannot be altered. As a guide if your task would require staying up a leaning ladder or stepladder for more than 30 minutes at a time it is recommended that you consider alternative equipment.

Ladders should only be used where they can be used safely where the ground is level and stable and where it is reasonably practicable to do so, the ladder can be secured.

The user should carry out a pre-use check before use:

- Check the stiles to make sure that they are not bent or damaged as the ladder could buckle or collapse
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- Check the feet to make sure that they are not missing, worn or damaged or the ladder could slip, make sure that they are evenly placed on the ground
- Check the rungs to make sure that they are not bent, worn, missing or loose
- Check any locking mechanism to make sure that they are not bent, worn, loose or damaged
- Check the stepladder platform, it should not be split or buckled
- Check the steps or treads on stepladders, they should not be contaminated, slippery or loose

### 3.4.2 Leaning ladders:

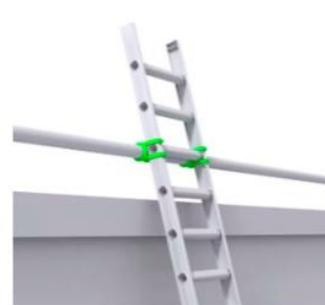
- The angle between the ground and the ladder should be 75° (or 1 unit out for every 4 units up)
- Special safety features are not required if the ladder is not more than 6m long
- If the ladder is more than 6m long an eyebolt fixing is required
- Only carry light materials and tools - read the manufacturer's labels on the ladder
- Don't overreach – make sure your belt buckle (navel) stays within the stiles
- Make sure the ladder is long enough or high enough for the task
- Don't overload it - check the pictogram on the side of the ladder
- Always grip the ladder and face the ladder rungs while climbing or descending
- Don't work off the top three rungs
- Don't stand ladders on moveable objects such as pallets, lift trucks, tower scaffolds
- Avoid holding items when climbing
- Don't work within 6m horizontally of a power line unless it had been made dead. Use a non-conductive ladder (e.g. fiberglass or timber) for any electrical work
- Maintain three points of contact when climbing and when at the work position
- You should secure it by tying the ladder and have a strong resting point



✓ **Figure 1** Ladder showing the correct 1 in 4 angle (means of securing omitted for clarity)



✓ **Figure 2** Correct – user maintaining three points of contact (means of securing omitted for clarity)



✓ **Figure 6** Correct – ladder tied at top stiles (correct for working on, but not for gaining access to a working platform/roof etc)

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## 3.4.3 Stepladders

- Check all stepladder feet are in contact with the ground and the steps are level
- Only carry light materials and tools
- Don't overreach
- Don't stand and work on the top three steps (including a step forming the very top of the stepladder) unless there is a suitable handhold
- Ensure any locking devices are engaged
- Try to position the stepladder to face the work activity and not side on
- Maintain the three points of contact at the working position. This means two feet and one hand, or when both hands need to be free for a brief period, two feet and the body supported by the stepladder



✓ **Figure 5** Example where two hands need to be free for a brief period for light work. Keep two feet on the same step and the body (knees or chest) supported by the stepladder to maintain three points of contact. Make sure a safe handhold is available

## 3.4.4 For ladders used as access:

- These should be tied
- They should extend at least 1 metre above the landing point to provide a secure handhold
- Stepladders should **not be used** to access another level unless they have been specifically designed for this



✓ **Figure 9** Correct – access ladders should be tied and extend at least 1 m above the landing point to provide a secure handhold

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## 3.5 Subterranean

The covers on wells should be firmly fixed, locked/secured and capable of withstanding such loads which may be placed upon them. They must however allow gas to escape safely.

When excavating it is essential that the process is planned properly, managed and supervised by a competent person and each worker must understand the rules and procedures when working in an excavation. Before digging any excavations, it is important to plan against the following:

- Collapse of the sides
- Materials falling onto people working in the excavation
- People and vehicles falling into the excavation
- People being struck by plant
- Undermining nearby structures
- Contact with underground services
- Access to the excavation
- Fumes
- Accidents to members of the public

Make sure the necessary equipment needed such as trench sheets, props, baulks are available before work starts.

## 3.6 Window cleaning

To reduce or remove the risk of working at height consider:

- Can the work be done from the ground, using a window cleaning pole
- Can the windows be cleaned from the inside?
- Do the windows need cleaning?

## 4 Are there standards or regulations, which apply?

FCO Health and Safety Policy  
Work at Height Regulations 2005 (WAHR)

## 5 Where can I find further information?

HSE website: <https://www.hse.gov.uk>  
HSE INDG 401 Working at height a brief guide  
HSE INDG 455 Using ladders and stepladders safely  
HSE HSG 33 Health and safety in roof work  
Building Regulations 2010 Approved document K  
HSE Guidance Note GS6 Avoiding danger from overhead power lines  
HSE Work at Height Access equipment Information Toolkit (WAIT) at:  
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/wait/index.htm>  
HSE General Information Sheet GEIS5 Fragile roofs – Safe working practices

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