

Working at Height:

Explanatory note from Health and Safety Authority



# Working at Height

These are briefing notes on the Work at Height Regulations - and some of the things you should be doing about them.

## What is work at height?

Work at height is work in any place, including a place at, above or below ground level, where a person could be injured if they fell from that place. Access and egress to a place of work can also be work at height.

Examples of work activities that are classified as working at height:

- Working on trestles
- Working on a flat roof
- Erecting false work or formwork
- Working on a ladder
- Working at ground level adjacent to an excavation;
- Working on formwork within an excavation
- Working near or adjacent to fragile materials

## Our key messages

- Carry out risk assessments for work at height activities and make sure that all work is Planned, Organised and carried out by a competent person
- Follow the General Principles of Prevention for managing risks from work at height – take steps to avoid, prevent or reduce risks
- Chose the right work equipment and select collective measures to prevent falls (such as guard rails and working platforms) before other measures which may only reduce the distance and consequences of a fall (such as nets or airbags) or may only provide fall-arrest through personal protection equipment.

## Requirements for employers

The Work at Height Regulations require employers to ensure that:

- All work at height is properly planned and organised
- A risk assessment is carried out for all work conducted at height
- Appropriate work equipment is selected and used
- People working at a height are competent
- Equipment used for work at height is properly inspected and maintained
- Risks from fragile surfaces are properly controlled

The risk assessment should include a careful examination of what harm could be caused from working at height with a view to taking the effective steps to reduce the likelihood of this harm occurring, either through avoiding the activity or, where this is not reasonably practicable, by carrying it out in a safe manner using work equipment that is appropriate to the task and the level of risk.

## **Exceptions**

Examples of where these regulations do not apply would include:

- Walking up and down a staircase in an office
- Working in an office on the upper floors of a temporary accommodation building
- Sitting in a chair
- Work carried out by private individuals on their own homes where this is not for the purpose of business or trade