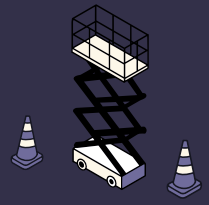


Working at Height



Working at height is a hazard. WorkSafe reported 645 injuries and 12 deaths in construction from 2022 – 2023. Most falls occur from low heights. Work under 3m and scaffolding under 5m are largely unregulated, although duties under HSAW still apply.

Awareness of hazards:

The surface impacted after a fall is the primary mechanism of harm. A fall may be from a structure, into a void (e.g. excavation), or through a surface (e.g. roof) into a void. Any object impacted contributes to the injury. Objects falling from a height is an additional hazard for workers below.

Understanding risks:

Working at height adds extra risk to work activities. Environmental and behavioural hazards combine to increase risks of falling. Health conditions increase risk by reducing attention, awareness, and judgement.

Systems for working at height present their own risks such as injuries, equipment failure, collisions, or striking services (e.g., power lines). Each system is designed for particular use and requires workers to be aware of limitations and risks, be a

competent operator, and use sound judgement.

Many systems that allow work at height are also technically 'controls' that isolate workers from the fall. These include scaffolding, edge protection, mobile and elevated work platforms, work platforms with guardrails, safety mesh, fall restraint, and work positioning systems. Other systems do not prevent a fall but reduce impacts, e.g., fall arrest, safety nets, and soft-landing systems.

Safe behaviours include keeping surfaces clear and using ladders correctly. Systems that provide no prevention include ladders, trestles, and raised platforms, and are only suitable for very short-term work activities.

Unsafe behaviour includes working at height while unwell, rushing, and not taking regular breaks.

Eliminate or minimise risks (examples):

Risk controls focus on either the hazard or the behaviour of workers and others.

- **Eliminate the hazard.** Low maintenance buildings, permanent systems, locate plant at ground level.
- **Substitute the hazard.** Alternative construction methods (prefabrication), grounded work methods.
- **Isolate the hazard.** Working at height systems with edge protection. Exclusions zones below works.
- **Use engineered modifications.** Fall restraint, safety nets, soft-landing systems. Mechanical access. Catch systems (for debris and objects falling from scaffolding). Slip and stability devices for ladders.

Focusing on human behaviours include:

- **Administration** of safe systems of work. Demonstrated competence. Certifications. Checks and signage. Safety plans. Operating manuals. ACOPs, SWIs, training, inductions, and meetings. Housekeeping.
- **Personal protection equipment (PPE).** Harnesses.