Safe Use of Access Equipment

Guidance Note 2

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Introduction

This Guidance Note gives practical information about using access equipment.

Sample templates have been included in Appendices 1 & 2. If you wish to use these templates to construct your own documents, you must ensure that all references to **Alcumus SafeContractor Accreditation** have been removed and the final documents are clearly incorporated into your existing safety management system.

Nature of the Problem

Falls are the single biggest cause of workplace deaths and the second most common cause of major injuries. The application of correct safety management can reduce the risks that they pose.

All industry sectors are exposed to the risks presented by work at height although the incidence varies considerably. The risk of falls is prevalent within the construction sector. 34 of the 72 fatalities in the construction industry in 2007/2008 resulted from a fall from height.

Common Factors

Most accidents involving falls could have been prevented if the right equipment had been provided, and if the equipment had been adequately maintained and was properly used. But experience shows that as many falls arise due to poor management as are caused by equipment failure.

Key faults include a failure:

- To recognise a problem
- To ensure that safe systems of work are followed
- To provide safe systems of work
- To supply adequate information, instruction, training or supervision provided
- To ensure use equipment supplied
- To provide safe plant/equipment

However, the best approach is to eliminate work at height if possible.

Causes

The most common incidents involve overreaching, over-balancing, equipment failure, misuse of equipment, unexpected movement (particularly where ladders are involved) and the failure of a fragile surface.

The main where falls take place are:

- From ladders (primarily from moveable ladders)
- From scaffolding (primarily from general access scaffolds)
- From work area/platforms
- From vehicles
- From roof edge
- Down stairs
- Through fragile roofs
- From gangways/catwalks

Legal Requirements

The Work at Height Regulations (WAHR) which came into effect in April 2005 consolidated and clarified the requirements for working at height.

The legal requirements governing work at height are:

- Work at height be avoided where possible
- All work at height is properly planned and organised;
- Those involved in work at height are competent;
- The risks from working at height are assessed and appropriate work equipment is selected and used;
- The risks from working on fragile surfaces are properly controlled; and
- Equipment for work at height is properly inspected and maintained.

The Regulations include Schedules that highlight requirements for existing places of work, and means of access for work at height, collective fall prevention (e.g. guardrails, working platforms), collective fall arrest (e.g. nets, airbags etc.), personal fall protection (e.g. work restraints, lanyards) and ladders.

Duty holders must:

- Avoid work at height where they can;
- Use work equipment or other measures to prevent falls where they cannot avoid working at height; and
- Where they cannot eliminate the risk of a fall, use work equipment or other measures to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall should one occur.

Please note that the regulations apply to all work at height where there is risk of a fall that is liable to cause personal injury. The previous 2 metre rule no longer applies.

The information below outlines the precautions to be taken when using certain types of access equipment for work at height. It does not cover cradles or rope access techniques.

When working at height the safest and most appropriate working platform must be used.

When making the decision what equipment to use, you must look at what the job requires, how long will it last and where it needs to be done. It is not illegal to use a ladder to work at height but other means of access such as fixed scaffold, tower scaffold or mobile elevated working platforms should be considered, before relying on ladders.

If you are considering using a ladder you must make sure that:

- The work is of short duration and involves only light work
- Three points of contact can be maintained at all times
- The work only requires one hand to be used
- The work can be reached without stretching
- The ladder can be fixed to prevent slipping
- A good handhold is available
- The ladder is safe to use and has been regularly inspected (a sample inspection sheet can be located in Appendix 1)

If a mobile elevated working platform is selected then you must ensure the following:

- Only a suitably trained and competent person operates the platform e.g. hold a suitable qualification such as a training certificate from the International Powered Access Federation (IPAF) or a CPCS card that covers the equipment being used etc.
- That fall arrest equipment is provided and used by the person or persons inside the platform
- No one in the platform will climb out over the guard rails unless the platform is specifically designed to allow this
- All hand tools are secured to the platform with safety ropes to prevent them falling should they be dropped
- A suitable means of decent from the platform is provided in case of an emergency
- Maintenance and test records (dated within the last 6 months) of the equipment are available for inspection

If a mobile scaffolding tower is selected then you must ensure the following:

- It has been erected by a suitably trained and competent individual e.g. PASMA trained etc.
- The relevant components show no signs of rust or damage
- A suitable means of access is provided inside the tower
- Toe boards and guard rails are provided at the suitable heights (Toe board 150mm, intermediate guard rail 470mm and the top guard rail 950mm)

- That weather and ground conditions are properly considered as these may adversely affect the stability of the tower and also it suitability for the task

- Manufacturers guidelines are followed in relation to the height to base width ratio
- That an inspection regime is in place to ensure the tower remains safe at all times (a sample inspection sheet can be located in Appendix 2)

If fixed scaffolding is selected then you must ensure the following:

- That it has been designed, erected, altered and dismantled by a competent person or the work is supervised by a competent person
- It is only erected on a firm level foundation that is capable of taking the load of the scaffold
- It is braced and tied to a permanent structure or otherwise stabilised
- If it is to be loaded then it must be appropriately altered to withstand the extra weight
- That platforms are fully boarded and wide enough for work and access
- That scaffold boards are properly supported and do not over hang excessively i.e. More than four times its thickness
- That there is a safe ladder or other means of access to the platform. If a ladder is used it must be tied off and extend at least one metre above the platform to provide a safe handhold
- It is regularly inspected and formal detailed inspections are made at least every 7 days or sooner if something occurs that may have affected its strength and/or stability

Overview

- Consider whether there are other, safer ways of doing the job. Can work at height be avoided?
- Ensure that you have fully considered all of the ways in which you or your employees could be at risk of falling
- Don't underestimate the risks involved.
- Simply 'taking care' is not enough. Proper precautions must be in place.
- Don't start work at height until you have properly planned the work and assessed and controlled the risks involved.
- Decide what equipment is required for the job. Ideally precautions should be designed to prevent a fall, for example using guard rails at a roof edge or crawling boards on a fragile roof. For some jobs it may be appropriate to use fall arrest equipment such as a safety harness and lanyard.
- If you have not got the appropriate equipment then get it. Don't take a chance with a ladder if what you should be using is a tower scaffold. Making do without the right equipment to speed up the work or minimise expense can lead to injury or death, as well as prosecution if the law is broken.
- Ensure that there are no defects in any equipment that you use.
- Make sure that equipment is used safely and that any necessary training or supervision is provided.

Further Guidance

- HSE Website: http://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/index.htm

- The Work at Height Regulations 2005 - A brief guide
  INDG401
  Available at: http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg401.htm

- Health and Safety in Construction
  HSG150
  ISBN 9780717661824
  Available at: http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg150.htm

- GEIS6 The Selection, management and use of mobile elevating work platforms
  Available at: http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/geis6.pdf

- Safe Use of Ladders and Stepladders: A Brief Guide
  INDG455
  Available at: http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg455.pdf

- Working on Roofs
  INDG284
  Available at: http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg284.pdf

Appendix 1

Ladder Inspection Sheet

Name & Address for whom the Inspection is being carried out for:	
Name & Position of person carrying out the checks:	
Date & Time of Inspection:	
Location of ladder:	
Make/Type of Ladder:	
Ladder Identification Number:	
Name & Address for whom the inspection is being carried out for for:	

	Ladder Inspection Checks	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
1	General condition sound (clean, dry, free from wet paint, oil, mud etc).				
2	No cracks.				
3	No rungs missing or loose.				
4	Not painted.				
5	No stiles damaged or bent.				
6	No warping or splitting (wood).				
7	No corrosion (metal).				
8	No sharp edges or dents (metal).				
9	No rungs bent (metal).				
10	Footpads present and securely fixed.				
11	Caps/rubber fittings in good condition.				
12	Slip-resistant rubber or plastic feet present.				
13	Bracing in good condition (stepladders).				

	Pre-Use Site Checks	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
14	Has the correct type of ladder been selected?				Type 1 Industrial - heavy duty (maximum load 175kg) Type 2 Commercial - medium duty (maximum load 150kg) Type 3 Household - light duty (maximum load 95kg).
15	Ladder positioned in a secure location, free from being struck by vehicles or knocked over by opening doors and windows.				
16	Ladder is placed against a strong non-fragile surface.				
17	Ladder is placed on even and stable ground.				
18	Ladder placed at the correct angle (75degrees / 1 in 4).				
19	Can the work be done without over reaching / stretching?				
20	Ladder extends 1 metre above the working platform or is a suitable handhold available.				
21	Top of ladder is tied securely by the use of ropes, ties or other stability devices (ensuring that the ladder is not secured by its rungs).				
22	If top of ladder is not tied, bottom of ladder is secured or second footed.				
23	Are suitable working platforms provided for ladders that are more than 9 metres in length?				
24	Is the correct foot wear being worn? i.e. clean soles, in good condition, no dangling laces				
25	Are tools stored in shoulder bags or holster belts?				
26	Are barriers and signs in place to prevent people straying into the work area?				
	Step Ladder Checks				
27	Step ladder placed on even ground.				
28	Step ladder positioned correctly (it should not be positioned side on to work				

	tasks).				

29	Is there a handhold such as a handrail available? Ensure that that the top two or three rungs are not worked from unless they have been specifically designed with special hand holds.				
30	Are the side hinges fully extended and securing clips in good condition and in working order?				

No	Further Actions Necessary	By Whom/Date

Appendix 2

Mobile Scaffold Tower Inspection Sheet

Name & Address for whom the inspection is being carried out for:	
Name & Position of person carrying out the checks:	
Date & Time of Inspection:	
Location of Tower Scaffold:	
Make/Type of Tower Scaffold:	
Tower Scaffold Identification Number:	
Inspection type:	**Before first use / After 7 days / Adverse weather / Alteration**

	Inspection of Component Parts	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
	Castors				
1	Castor housings, wheel and tyres not damaged.				
2	Wheels rotate freely.				
3	Castor swivels rotate properly.				
4	Wheel brakes function properly.				
	Adjustable Legs				
5	Not bent.				
6	Threads undamaged.				
7	Threads clean and free from debris.				
8	Device to stop the leg falling out of the frame checked and functioning correctly.				
	Frames.				
9	Frame members are straight and undamaged.				
10	Frame members free of extraneous material.				

11	Spigots are straight and parallel with the axis of the column tube				
12	The devices for locking frames together have been checked and are functioning correctly.				
	Platforms.	**Yes**	**No**	**N/A**	**Comments**
13	Undamaged.				
14	Frames are square and true.				
15	Decks are not split or warped.				
16	Deck-to-frame fixings are firm.				
17	Toe board clips/fittings are undamaged and firm.				
18	Outriggers and stabilizers have been checked for damage and hooks and couplers are functioning correctly.				
	Pre-Use Site Checks				
19	Ground is firm and level.				
20	No overhead obstructions or hazards.				
21	Wind and weather conditions permit safe use.				
22	The height to base ratio is correct (check suppliers instruction manual).				
23	Mobile tower is vertical and square and the horizontal braces and platform are level.				
24	Outriggers or stabilisers are correctly positioned and secured.				
25	All base plates or castor wheels are fully in contact with the ground, including those on stabilisers or outriggers. All castors should be properly locked.				
26	All spigot and socket joint locks holding the frames together are secured.				
27	All bracing members have been located exactly in accordance with the supplier's instructions.				
28	All guardrails, intermediate rails and				

	toe boards are in position.				

29	Access ladders in position and firmly located.				
30	Barriers in place at ground level to prevent people walking into the tower or straying into the work area.				
31	Suitable storage provision is made for tools and materials on the platform.				

Further Actions Necessary	By Whom/Date