

WORK AT HEIGHT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Work at Height Regulations 2005 define work at height as

Work in any place, including a place at or below ground level, also obtaining access to or egress from such a place while at work, except by a staircase in a permanent workplace, where if measures required by the above regulations were not taken, a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal injury.

In the context of the above regulations:

- “access and egress” include ascent and descent,
- “fragile surface” means a surface which would be liable to fail if any reasonably foreseeable load were to be applied to it,
- “personal fall protection system” means a fall prevention, work restraint, work positioning, fall guard or rescue system other than a system in which the only safeguards are collective safeguards or are rope access and positioning techniques,
- “working platform” means any platform used as a place of work or as a means of access to or egress from a place of work and includes any scaffold, suspended scaffold, cradle, mobile platform, trestle, gangway, gantry, and stairway which is so used.

2.0 APPLICATION

The requirements imposed by these Regulations on an employer shall apply in relation to work:

- by an employee of his,
- by any other person under his control, to the extent of his control.

The requirements imposed by these Regulations on an employer shall also apply to a self-employed person, in relation to work:-

- By him; or
- By a person under his control, to the extent of his control; and
- To any person other than a self-employed person, in relation to work by a person under his control, to the extent of his control

3.0 ORGANISATION AND PLANNING

The Work at Height Regulations 2005, regulation 4 requires that work at height is properly planned, appropriately supervised; and carried out in a manner which is so far as is reasonably practicable safe:

- only by those persons competent to do so,
- that its planning includes the selection of work equipment, planning for emergencies and rescue and
- only when the weather conditions do not jeopardise the health and safety of persons involved in the work.

4.0 COMPETENCE

Every employer is required to ensure that no person engages in any activity, including organisation, planning, and supervision in relation to work at height or work equipment for use in such work

- unless he is competent to do so or,
- if being trained, is being supervised by a competent person.

5.0 AVOIDANCE OF RISK

Risk assessment is required under Regulation 3 of the Management Regulations to identify the measures to be taken. Work at height is not to be carried out where it is reasonably practicable to carry out the work safely other than at height.

Where work is carried out at height, suitable and sufficient measures are to be taken to prevent so far as is reasonably practicable any person falling a distance liable to cause personal injury. Such measures will include his ensuring that the work is carried out from an existing place of work, or in the case of obtaining access and egress using an existing means compliant with Schedule 1 to the regulations, where it is reasonably practicable to carry it out safely and under appropriate ergonomic conditions.

Where it is not reasonably practicable for the work to be carried out from an existing place of work or using existing means, sufficient work equipment is to be provided for preventing, so far as is reasonably practicable, a fall occurring.

Where the measures taken above do not eliminate the risk of a fall occurring then so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient work equipment to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall are required.

The employer is required to provide such additional training and instruction or take other additional suitable and sufficient measures to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable any person falling a distance liable to cause personal injury.

In addition to the application of the regulations (regulation 3), the requirement for organisation and planning (regulation 4), for competence of the workforce (regulation 5) and avoidance of risk (Regulation 6) by the carrying out of risk assessments, which will apply in virtually all situations where work at height is under consideration, further regulations define measures to be taken for

specific situations and in specific industries such as in construction and building maintenance etc.

- Requirements for selection of equipment for work at height, the way in which it is used and the environment in which it is used.
- Requirements for particular work equipment, guard rails, toe boards, working platforms, scaffold and personal fall protection systems etc. such as are found in construction and property maintenance work.
- Measures to be taken when working near fragile surfaces that could fail under a persons weight such as fragile sheet roofing, skylights etc.
- Measures to be taken to prevent injury from falling objects.
- Areas designated as danger areas
- Inspection regimes for equipment used while working at height.

The work at height regulations apply in work situations where it is possible for a person to fall from a higher level to one lower and as a result sustain injury. There are thousands of situations in every branch of construction, industry, commerce, public service sector etc. where such an incident could occur.