

Working at Height overview

About working at height and this overview:

Falls from height are one of the biggest causes of serious injuries and fatalities in workplaces often because the risks are under-estimated and how serious injury can occur from even the most minor of errors. Falls from ladders and falls through a fragile roof are often the most common cause of these serious injuries.

The Scouts' guidance on working at height is laid out in FS 320009 – *Falls from Height* and follows the guidance from the Health and Safety Executive. Both these sources of guidance can be found in the HQ Safety Folder. Following the guidance is, in the HSE's own words, 'normally enough to comply with the Work at Height Regulations 2005'.

The full risk assessment is available in the HQ Safety Folder. This overview lists the equipment we have and how it use it safely.

Before working at height:

Do I need to work at height?

Quite a lot of jobs can be carried out at ground level, either by moving what you need to do to the ground or by carrying it out from the ground. For example, changing a clock battery can be done at ground level rather than at the top of a ladder or cleaning of cobwebs can be done with a long, extendable pole.

What equipment should I use?

Most jobs at our HQ are going to be short term in nature. Large maintenance jobs at height occur only sporadically in the building's lifespan and thought should be made to what measures and equipment are required to prevent a fall or to minimise the risk of a fall. For short term jobs, these considerations are less likely.

The law says ladders can be used for work at height when a risk assessment has shown using equipment with greater fall protection is not justified due to low risk AND short duration of use. As a guide, if your task requires staying up a ladder for 30 minutes at a time then alternatives should be used. Ladders should only be used if they can be used safely – on a flat and stable floor and where it can be secured. (Source: HSE *Safe use of ladders and stepladders*)

Competence to work at height:

People working at height should be competent to do so. In the case of the short-term jobs likely to be undertaken in the HQ this will largely involve being aware of the contents of this risk assessment and of the specific rules for the equipment being used.

Risks common to all equipment:

Fragile surfaces

People can fall through fragile roofs or a ladder may move if leant against a fragile surface that subsequently breaks. Working on fragile surfaces such as roofs should be avoided if possible. Try and identify if any surfaces in the work area are fragile and plan how that risk is going to be managed.

Slips

Slippery treads on ladders could cause falls. Treads should be checked for any spillages before use and ladders should not be used outside in poor weather. Appropriate footwear should always be worn.

Falling objects

Ensure any objects such as tools are kept secure where they are unlikely to fall onto others below. If appropriate, clear the area below and create an exclusion zone until the work is complete.

Big stepladder use:

The big stepladder is kept next to the door from the hall into the corridor, near the fire bell.

The ladder should only be used for low risk work that will require less than 30 minutes up the ladder. For higher risk work or work that will require longer than 30 minutes up the ladder, alternative arrangements should be sought.

Conduct a quick visual inspection before use and a detailed recorded inspection at least once every year. For things to inspect on a step ladder, see the checklist below.

- All four feet must be level on a flat and stable floor clear of dirt and debris.
- A second person must be footing the ladder at the bottom.
- Only carry light materials and tools.
- Keep three points of contact at all times when on the ladder.
- Don't over-reach outside of your base of support.
- Position the ladder facing the task at hand to avoid side-leaning.
- Don't stand on the top three steps of the ladder.
- Ensure the locking device is secure before use.
- Cordon off the area beneath the ladder to prevent people walking beneath it.
- Ensure the ladder is placed away from anything, such as doors, which might bump into it and disrupt the person working above.

Loft ladder use:

The ladder is fixed in place to the balcony access. Users should conduct a quick visual inspection before use (see below). Formal recorded inspections to be recorded every year.

- Both feet must be level on a flat and stable floor clear of dirt and debris.
- Keep three points of contact at all times when on the ladder.
- Don't over-reach outside of your base of support. Avoid side-leaning.
- Ensure the locking device is secure before use.
- The ladder should be the correct length so the angle is correct. One locking device should be on the bottom catch, the other should be in the first catch.
- Always climb and descend the ladder facing the ladder body.

Small stepladder use:

The small step ladder is normally stored in the cleaner's cupboard or accessible toilet. The ladder should only be used for low risk work that will require less than 30 minutes up the ladder. For higher risk work or work that will require longer than 30 minutes up the ladder, alternative arrangements should be sought.

Conduct a quick visual inspection before use and a detailed recorded inspection at least once every year. For things to inspect on a step ladder, see the checklist below.

- All four feet must be level on a flat and stable floor clear of dirt and debris.
- Only carry light materials and tools.
- Keep three points of contact at all times when on the ladder.
- Don't over-reach outside of your base of support.
- Position the ladder facing the task at hand to avoid side-leaning.
- Don't stand on the top step of the ladder.
- Ensure the locking device is secure before use.
- Ensure the ladder is placed away from anything, such as doors, which might bump into it and disrupt the person working above.

Scaffold tower use:

The scaffolding tower is ideal for longer periods of work at height as it elevates the user up to the correct height and is equipped with guard rails to prevent falls.

- Scaffolding tower only to be used by trained individuals.
- Tower to be constructed following instructions by a person trained in how to safely put it together. It should not be used if the users and assemblers have insufficient training.
- It should be visually checked after assembly, after any event likely to have affected its stability or before use when an inspection last occurred more than 7 days ago.
- Tower only to be used on a solid level surface.
- Appropriate footwear to be worn.

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