

Working at height

About working at height:

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 [Falls from Height \(FS320009\)](#) and follows the guidance from the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is, in the HSE's own words, 'normally enough to comply with the Work at Height Regulations 2005'.

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.

On the following page, we give some quick hints to use the different ladders or height equipment safely. These are included on or near the equipment itself.

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.

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.

Risk Assessment – Working at height

Date written: 7th February 2023

Written by: Steven Osborn

Review date: February 2024.

Hazards identified	Who's at risk	Existing risk controls	Additional controls required?
Equipment condition and use:			
Poor maintenance of access equipment (ladders, scaffolding tower etc.) Risk of personal injury through equipment failure.	Users, those around or under equip.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defects noticed in access equipment reported. Visual check given prior to use. Ladders formally inspected at least annually. Ladders recommended for replacement if damaged or defective to prevent injury. Shortened version of safe use for each piece of equipment and the visual checks that should be performed are attached to the equipment or located next to its storage place for reference prior to use. 	
Inappropriate use of scaffold tower: Risk of personal injury or fall as a result of incorrect set up, placement or use of tower.	Users, those around or under equip.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scaffold tower only used by trained persons. Tower dismantled and stored when not in use in location where it is unlikely to be tampered with. Visual check made prior to use. Tower only used when there is a firm level surface including outside. 	
Inappropriate use of ladders or stepladders: Risk of personal injury or fall as a result of incorrect set up, placement or use of ladder.	Users, those around or under equip.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ladder to balcony secured at the top to the balcony floor preventing slippage. Basic maintenance carried out to balcony ladder when required – footing and handle. Clear rules created and communicated. Located near to ladder's storage place. Top three steps not to be used – written on these steps. 	
Environmental risks			
Fragile surfaces: Risk of falling through fragile surfaces (e.g. roof) or from equipment resting against fragile surfaces (e.g. fascias).	Users, those around or under equip.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid working on fragile surfaces if at all possible e.g working from below if required. Need to go on roof is remote. When carrying out this work a more specific risk assessment should be completed prior to work starting. 	
Poor weather: Risk of slips and falls due to poor weather.	Users, those around or under equip.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual check of all surfaces prior to use for any spills or substances which might cause a spill. Do not use equipment to work at height outdoors during poor weather. 	

Personal risks:			
Falls: Risk of serious injury through falling from height.	Users, those around or under equip.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid working at height if possible, for example using long handled tools for some jobs. • Ensure equipment used is suitable for the job and designed for working at height. • Consider if any specialist PPE is required for specialist jobs. • Only authorised users allowed on the balcony. No Beaver, Cub or Scout is allowed on the balcony and signs are in place to communicate this. • Condition of removable balcony wall to be inspected periodically and defects reported. 	
Carrying: Risk of falls from equipment through too few points of contact or through moving outside of support base.	Users, those around or under equip.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some users trained for working at height through occupations. • Instructions provided for each ladder reminding of base of support and three points of contact. • Weight limits for ladder are clearly displayed on ladder. • 	
Objects falling from height	Users of HQ.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See HQ Risk Assessment. • Objects should not be thrown down from height. • Areas where there is a risk of objects falling through works should be kept clear from other users. • Area around top of ladder to balcony to be kept clear at all times. 	

Appendix A: Yearly inspection of ladders

Date of inspection:

Name of person inspecting:

Identity	Are feet damaged or worn?	Are stiles twisted, bent or dented?	Are rungs cracked, worn, bent or loose?	Are tie rods missing or damaged?	Are rivets loose, welding cracked?	Sign off and date.