



# Working at Height

## Health and Safety Guide

### Intention

This brief subject-specific guide is intended to help you understand how to reduce the risks from working at height.

### What's the issue?

Falling from height is a major cause of workplace fatalities, as well as causing thousands of major injuries every year.

The Work at Height Regulations 2005 apply in England, Wales and Scotland and mean that churches have a legal duty to provide protection for their employees and persons under their control. It is important to remember that the Health and Safety Executive regard it as good practice to provide volunteers with the same level of protection as if they were employees.

### **What is 'working at height'?**

The regulations define 'work at height' as:

- a) work in any place, including a place at or below ground level where, if measures required by these regulations were not taken, a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal injury
- b) moving around the workplace, except by a staircase in a permanent workplace where, if measures required by these regulations were not taken, a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal injury
- c) All work at height activities should be risk assessed, in accordance with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, to identify and evaluate the hazards and risks. Risks need to be eliminated or suitable control measures introduced.

### **Working at height - action points**

#### **Organisation and planning**

Every employer should ensure that work at height is properly planned, appropriately supervised and carried out in a manner which, so far as is reasonably practicable, is safe.

Organisation and planning of work at height should also include planning for emergencies and rescue, and ensure work at height is not undertaken during adverse weather conditions.

## **Competence**

Every employer should ensure that no person engages in any activity, including organisation, planning and supervision, in relation to work at height or equipment for use in such work, unless he is competent to do so or, if being trained, is being supervised by a competent person.

## **Avoidance of risks**

Every employer should ensure that work is not carried out at height where it is reasonably practicable to carry out the work safely otherwise than at height.

Where work is carried out at height, every employer shall take suitable and sufficient measures to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, any person falling a distance liable to cause personal injury.

## **Selection of work equipment**

Employers should give priority to collective protection measures over personal protection measures. They must also take account of the distance and consequences of a potential fall and the need for easy and timely evacuation and rescue in an emergency.

## **Requirements for particular work equipment**

Work equipment should be provided where necessary, including guardrails, toe-boards and barriers, working platforms, nets and airbags, personal fall protection systems and ladders.

## **Fragile surfaces**

No person at work should pass across or near, or work on, from or near, a fragile surface where it is reasonably practicable to carry out work safely and under appropriate ergonomic conditions without his doing so.

Employers must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that suitable and sufficient platforms, coverings, guardrails or similar means of support or protection are provided and used so that any foreseeable loading is supported by such supports or borne by such protection.

If a risk of falling remains, employers must take suitable and sufficient measures to minimise the distance and consequence of a fall.

Prominent warning notices should be fixed on the approach to any fragile surface.

## **Inspection of places**

So far as is reasonably practicable, employers should inspect the surface, and every parapet, permanent rail or other such fall protection measure of every place of work at height prior to its use.

## **Use of ladders**

Every year many people are injured, some fatally, while using ladders. More than half the accidents occur because ladders are not securely placed and fixed. A ladder is a means of access, not a safe working platform.

## **How can I get help?**

If you need clarification on any of this material, please contact your dedicated health and safety consultant. If your Ellis Whittam consultant is unavailable, please contact the health and safety helpline on 0845 226 8393.