

Working safely at heights

USQSafe, Human Resources



What are the risks from falling from heights?

Significant injuries or death may result from falling from heights. Falls include those from platforms, ladders, rigging, scaffolding, roofs and into penetrations (e.g. holes in floors) or through brittle surfaces such as asbestos cement roofs. Risk must be managed if a person can fall less than 3m (housing construction) and 2m (all other construction) or if work on a roof pitch is more than 26 degrees. Recommendations are not to go less than 2 metres from the edge without a fall safety control measures.

General safety tips

A risk assessment should be conducted prior to the commencement of working at height. This information should be attached to the Construction Workplace Plan and form part of the Work Method Statement. Items to consider:

- Can the risk of falls be eliminated?
- Is the roof or elevated area structurally sound?
- Safe access to area i.e. ladders - vertical lifeline system and cable or rope grabbing device for travel up and down the line.

Responsible Person means a person who has, through a combination of training, education and experience, acquired knowledge and skills enabling that person to perform correctly a specified task.

Choosing your equipment

- Always choose the best equipment for the job e.g. a mobile scaffold or elevating work platform may be more safe and suitable.
- If a ladder is the best option, ensure the type of ladder you have chosen is properly suited to the task and of adequate strength e.g. manufactured for industrial use and with a load rating of least 120 kilograms.
- Always inspect the ladder before use to ensure it is in a good working condition.

A ladder used for access must extend at least one metre above the level where a person exits the ladder.

Risk considerations for working at heights

- Can guardrails, screens, safety nets or barriers be erected prior to work commencing?

- Are personal fall arrest or restraint systems appropriate?
- Is there safe access to and from anchorage points?
- Are anchor points appropriate for shock loading expected?
- Are those working below, aware of work above?
- Are lanyards / safety lines working slack between worker and anchor points kept to a minimum so the pendulum effect is eliminated?
- Are employees trained in height safety work and rescue procedures?
- Is rescue equipment available if timely rescue cannot be expected from emergency services?

Training

- All users of fall arrest equipment should be thoroughly trained on the limitations, application, care, maintenance and inspection of height safety equipment to ensure that the risks have been reduced; and
- If you have not, contact your supervisor immediately.

Care and maintenance

To ensure 'life preserving' equipment is properly maintained.

- Formal inspection and record system needs to be established;
- All components checked for wear and damage before and after every use;
- Damaged / worn equipment must be immediately removed from service and a 'Danger – Do Not Operate' tag affixed, repaired or replaced;
- Body harness and associated equipment must be stored in a cool dry place away from direct sunlight, heat, humidity, chemicals and other causes of potential damage; and
- Manufacturer's advice on care, maintenance and inspection should be followed.

Note: Fall arrest equipment - harnesses, shock absorbers, retracting lanyards and descenders are designed for one fall single use only, after which discard. Other equipment should be sent to the manufacturer for inspection

Legislation

WH&S Regulation 2011 – s306B-306J, 312, 315B-M
 Australian Standard AS 1891.1:2007 Harness and ancillary equipment
 Australian Standard AS 1891.2:2001 Horizontal lifeline and rail system
 Australian Standard AS 1891.3:1997 Fall arrest device
 Australian Standard AS 1891.3:1997 Selection, Use, and Maintenance
 Managing the Risk of Falls at Workplace Code of Practice 2011

Record of training:

I have read and understand the information provided to me for working safely at heights and I have been issued with:



Tea break talk paper – working safely at heights.

Employee's name (PRINT) Employee's signature __/__/__
Date

Trainer's name (PRINT) Trainer's signature __/__/__
Date

Document procedure

- Original - to be kept on the employee's record of training
- Copy – forward to USQSafe for archive filing
- Electronic – USQSafe to record on PeopleSoft