SAFETY FROM THE GROUND UP

MAKING SENSE OF THE WORK AT HEIGHT LEGISLATION

SAFETY FROM THE GROUND UP
“Most accidents are preventable. Reducing death and injury resulting from falls is the Health and Safety Executive’s No.1 priority in construction.”

Health & Safety Executive

The facts:

- Falls from height are the main cause of fatality in the workplace. There are over 40 deaths a year.
- Nearly 4000 people are seriously injured every year falling from height.
- 50% of fatal accidents in construction are caused by falls from height.
- 25% of major injuries in construction result from falls from height.
- Two-thirds of major injuries result from falls from below head height.
- Falls from height cost £400 million per annum.
Falls from height account for over 40 deaths each year and almost 4000 major injuries. Two-thirds of injuries are from falls below head height

The cost is estimated to be more than £400 million.

In light of these alarming statistics, Work at Height Regulations were introduced to bring clear and actionable duties, for those responsible for work at height, to reduce falls. The regulations apply to anyone, anywhere, working at any height. They also place responsibility and liability firmly on the employer for ensuring that safe working practices are adopted.

The regulations cover all aspects of working at height including:

- risk assessment
- selection and usage of equipment
- training
- planning
- inspection
- competence
- supervision.

As the leading tool and equipment hire company, Speedy take safety extremely seriously. That’s why we have developed the ‘Safety From The Ground Up’ communication campaign, of which this guide is part. The campaign covers a wide range of safety topics and material including toolbox talks, posters and CDs.

This guide has been produced to help everybody involved with working at height, understand the legislation and work more safely.
The six guiding principles

The legislation is underpinned by six key principles.

1. Working at height regulations affect anyone, anywhere, any height
2. Risk assessment - 3 stage hierarchy of control (avoid, prevent, minimise)
3. The selection of the correct product (collective protection before personal)
4. Correct use of products
5. Requires planning, organisation and competence
6. Collective responsibility

Each principle deals with a specific area of working at height which is explained in more detail throughout this guide. Adopt these principles and encourage your co-workers to do the same and you will be well on the way to a much safer and happier working environment.

As part of Speedy’s commitment to safety, we continue to extend our product range to include equipment that helps improve safety when working at height. Our ‘New Products Committee’, which includes health & safety specialists, meets regularly to review next generation equipment. This guide includes suggestions to help you select the most appropriate equipment for the job in hand.

But, what is working at height?

WAH Regulations define “Work at Height” as work in any place where a person can fall a distance and they could suffer injury. This can be a place above or below ground, so if you are working on a roof or beside a trench and you could fall and be injured you are working at height. Fragile surfaces that a worker could fall through are also covered in the legislation.

For the detailed legislation visit the Health and Safety Executive website at www.hse.gov.uk/falls
The fact is accidents can happen at any height, anywhere and to anyone. So working at height legislation applies to everyone, from the builder on-site to the office temp, from the shop assistant stacking shelves to the farmer stacking hay. It includes all employees, sub-contractors and the self-employed.

Working at height means any height, above and below ground. Up to 2/3rds of major injuries result from falls of less than 2 metres and the cost runs to £400 million a year. To comply with the Work at Height Regulations it is important that everyone reviews their current working practices and thinks ‘safety at height’.

**Work at height regulations apply:**

- To all employees whether working on site or in offices.
- To all sub-contractors whether employed by another company or self employed.
- To any work carried out at any height above and below ground.

"Brace yourself Neville"
Risk Assessment

Proper risk assessment is a fundamental part of the Work at Height legislation and is based on a 3 stage ‘hierarchy of control’:

1. Avoid  
2. Prevent  
3. Minimise

The first question to ask yourself before undertaking any job at height is, could I avoid it by doing some or all of the work at ground level? This could mean pre-assembly of a structure on the ground, or using extendable equipment.

If there is no alternative and you have to work at height then you must do everything possible to prevent a fall. Modern day access equipment with guardrails and toe boards provide important safeguards but think too about the weather conditions and how, for example, wet or uneven ground or high winds might affect you carrying out the job safely.

If you cannot use access equipment that will prevent a person falling you must minimise the distance and the consequences of a potential fall.

Install collective protection measures like Safety Decking. If you are using towers, consider fitting intermediate platforms. If the job demands it, use personal fall arrest equipment but only as a last resort and remember to consider how you would rescue a person should they fall.

Whatever you do, always be sure to assess the risks first, before you select equipment and start the job.

1. Avoid working at height if possible:
   - Find a safer alternative.
   - Assemble a structure on the ground.
   - Use extendable equipment.

2. If you have to work at height, do everything possible to prevent a fall:
   - Use access towers with guardrails and toe boards.
   - Avoid fragile surfaces.
   - Consider weather conditions.
   - Consider if you need personal fall prevention equipment.

3. Minimise the distance and consequences of a fall
   - Consider collective protection before personal protection.
   - Consider fall arrest equipment but only as a last resort.
   - Use equipment so that it minimises the distance a worker can fall.
   - Consider a rescue plan in case of a fall.

“Here comes another one, lads!”
**AVOID**

Consider use of extendable tools; products including survey equipment can help avoid the need to work at height, and lifting equipment can raise materials to a height safely and efficiently.

**PREVENT**

There is a wide range of modern access equipment that enables work at height to be carried out including access towers, podiums, platforms, personnel lifts, MEWPS, and mobile man anchors.

**MINIMISE**

If it is not possible to remove the risk of a fall, products such as safety decking, personal fall arrest equipment, temporary life lines, netting and airbags can help to reduce the distance and the consequences of a fall.

For more information call Speedy Hire 0845 606 6886
Select the correct equipment

The correct selection of equipment is essential to safety at height and a ‘make do’ mentality has no place in today’s working environment. As part of the risk assessment you should consider the working conditions, duration, frequency and user competence as well as the risk of erecting and dismantling equipment.

Access towers are now the backbone of working at height equipment, allowing for safe completion of work in numerous applications. It’s important however that access equipment is both properly erected and inspected by someone who is fully competent and that this approach is repeated every time the tower is moved or modified.

The ladders’ ‘multi-purpose’ role is a thing of the past and is now limited to use only for the purposes of access and for low risk, short duration work but only when justified by risk assessment. Always ensure ladders are correctly angled, properly secured and that users maintain three points of contact (a hand and two feet) at all times.

Work restraint or fall arrest equipment is suitable for tasks such as erecting scaffold, at roof inspection or window cleaning, but its use should be regarded as a last resort only after other lower risk solutions have been considered. Always consider collective before personal protection.

**Towers**
- Must be properly erected and inspected by a competent person.
- Fit double guard rails, toe boards and interim platforms.

**Ladders**
- Use only for access and for low risk, short duration work and only when risk assessment justifies.
- Use at the correct angle and always secure.
- Maintain three physical points of contact at all times.

**Podiums**
- Use in preference to step ladders.
- Use at approved heights only.

**Personal fall arrest equipment**
- Fitted correctly and suitably anchored.
- Fit as a precaution, not as a substitute for safe working practice.

“I’m knocking on heaven’s door”
**TOWERS**

Access towers are a flexible means of work at height. Available in many models sizes, in double or single width, GRP for sensitive environments, stairway towers and with bridging decks for longer spans.

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**LADDERS**

Ladders may be appropriate for some access needs and low risk, short duration tasks, but ensure other solutions are not more appropriate.

If ladders are selected consider using with a ladder stopper and always tie/lash the ladder head to a permanent structure. For leaning ladders always keep the angle at approximately 75 degrees from horizontal.

Always maintain 3 points of contact with the ladder while using it.

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**LANYARDS AND HARNESS**

Personnel fall arrest systems should always be seen as the last resort. Items designed for work restraint, that is to restrain a user from a fall hazard, should not be used for arresting falls.

Consideration needs to be given to rescue of an individual should a fall take place. Make sure that anyone using this type of equipment is properly trained and that they can be rescued quickly if necessary.

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For more information call Speedy Hire 0845 606 6886
Use equipment correctly

Risk assessment is a constant theme throughout the Work At Height Regulations and it also applies to the suitability of your selected equipment.

Having chosen the right equipment for the job, you need to ensure the person using it is fully trained and competent to do so. Never assume anything. If you are unsure or have any doubts ask for advice or training (courses are available covering all aspects of working at height).

Before starting the job, consider if weather or ground conditions are likely to prove hazardous. Remember, it’s all about minimising risk. Every stage of the safety procedures should be followed, until it becomes second nature.

It’s also important to pay attention to the manufacturer’s assembly guides and if you are hiring equipment make sure you have the correct user guides.

Good working practice saves time and money.

“What are you working on, Reg, the leaning tower of Pizza!”

Training and manufacturers instructions

➤ As part of your risk assessment, consider the need to work at height and the suitability of your chosen equipment.

➤ Ensure that the person using the equipment is trained and competent to do so.

➤ Consider ground and weather conditions.

➤ Always follow manufacturer’s operating instructions.

➤ If using hire equipment make sure you get proper hand over instructions.

➤ If in doubt, ask for advice and or training.
INFORMATION

Speedy provides safety information with each hire. These give essential tips on do’s and don’ts, advise on use of PPE, and where appropriate comment on work and area and equipment use.

INSPECTION

All hire items are regularly inspected and maintained by Speedy.

With Towers, inspection on-site is critical when the tower is first erected and then on a regular basis afterwards. The use of Scafftags can provide a clear inspection trail. Lockit Tower Locks help to increase non-authorised use and disassembly of scaffolding tower.

TRAINING

Speedy Hire provide two training courses relating to Towers, one for Operatives and one for Supervisors. Both have been approved by PASMA. Operatives Training includes safe assembly, repositioning, and work with access towers. Supervisor Training includes hazard recognition, risk assessment, and inspection of erected towers and their components.

For more information call Speedy Hire 0845 606 6886
Requires competence

All too often competence is taken for granted in the workplace. Questions over a person’s suitability to carry out a task go unasked and the result can be catastrophic.

The legislation states that no one should be involved in any aspect of working at height unless they are fully trained and competent to do so. This includes planning, organisation, supervision and the use of equipment. People without the necessary know-how are a risk to themselves and to others. If a person is not competent they should not use or be asked to use equipment. It is as simple as that.

It follows that all work at height should be properly planned and carried out by people who can do the work without putting themselves or others at risk and properly managed and supervised. There are no excuses. Safety literature and training courses are available from Speedy Hire to make sure that everyone’s up to the job.

Planning, organisation & supervision

- No person should engage in any activity relating to working at height, including planning, organisation or supervision, unless they are competent to do so. This means that they have the right knowledge and experience to do the job safely.
- No person should use or be asked to use equipment unless properly trained.
- All work at height should be properly planned and supervised by a competent person.
- All work should be carried out in a way that is, as far as is practical, safe.
- Access equipment such as towers or scaffolding, which has been assembled or erected should be inspected in position by a competent person prior to use.

Training literature and courses

- Speedy Hire offers a range of training courses and safety literature.

“Up you go Joe!”
Collective responsibility

Responsibility for safety in the workplace is down to you and everyone else at work. Whether it’s a manufacturing plant, a warehouse, an office or a huge construction site, safety is your responsibility.

In a busy working environment it’s important to look out for potential hazards and report them immediately. Common sense some might say but you’ll be surprised how many accidents are just waiting to happen.

It’s not about looking after number one, collective responsibility means looking out for everyone. It means looking after your access equipment and reporting faults or damage, not making do. It means using equipment safely and ensuring that your workmates do the same. It means clearly marking off danger areas and keeping your eyes peeled for hidden dangers like falling objects or fragile surfaces. And, if you spot something, do something about it. If possible and risk free, make it safe, or mark it off and immediately report it to your supervisor.

Think about the safety of others and they’ll do the same for you.

“...you forgot to fix the guard rail”
Training the workforce

It goes without saying that training will prove vital in fully implementing the Work At Height legislation.

Speedy recognises the need for competence among the workforce and we can, in addition to the provision of ‘tool-box’ talks, arrange courses in all areas of working at height, as well as training for use of equipment across the Speedy range.

Courses can be tailored to suit a customer’s specific needs and we offer training approved by associations including PASMA.

We see the training of our own staff as equally important. In order to improve our service to customers, Speedy’s staff receive induction training through to all aspects of equipment, repair and inspection.

At Speedy, we regard health and safety support for both our employees and customers as an absolute priority. It’s not just something we say, we practice it every working day.

For further information on our health and safety policy and training services contact us on 0845 606 6886 or visit our website www.speedyhire.co.uk/safety

"Congratulations... you're now certified!"
Building awareness of the working at height legislation is essential, if it is to change attitudes and promote safe working practice throughout industry.

No1 for health & safety

The award winning “Safety from the Ground Up” campaign.

Safety from the Ground Up is Speedy Hire’s pioneering health and safety campaign focusing on raising the awareness of new regulations and promoting safe working practice. This involves:

- Development of a communications toolkit - including stickers, booklets, pocket guides, tool box presenter, posters and CDs
- Delivery of tool box talks to over 150,000 operatives
- Training of over 700 customer facing Speedy personnel
- Offering safe alternatives to working at height, vibration-reduced tools, dust control and manual handling aids
- Working in partnership with customers to raise awareness of the new regulations - dual branded option available, subject to conditions
- Equipment demonstrations at customer locations
- Training programmes tailored to customer needs

This campaign has been independently recognised for playing an important part in increasing the awareness of safe working practice.

- Lord Hunt, when Minister for Health & Safety, praised the campaign for its contribution towards making workplaces safer
- HAE – Best Contribution to Health & Safety award 2006 and 2007
- B2B Awards – Best Customer Relationship campaign 2006
- CMA Awards – Campaign of the Year 2005
- DTI Business in the community - Responsible Marketing 2007
- Orange, National Business Awards - 2007

If you would like more copies of this material, or information on product solutions, just call us.

call 0845 606 6886 or visit www.speedyhire.co.uk