

Working at Height Safety Policy

Working at Height Safety Policy of

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Date
01/03/2018

Policy Review Date
28/02/2019

Falls from a height greater than 2 Mtrs account for almost a third of all accidental deaths at work.

Each year, more accidents arise from the use and/or misuse of ladders and steps than from any other single piece of equipment.

To reduce the risk of death or injury when using ladders and steps, a clear Policy for inspection and maintenance is necessary.

The law requires that scaffolding work be done with competent and experienced supervision. The loading for which scaffold has been provided should be known. The loading should be evenly distributed and the scaffold should not be overloaded.

It is the implementation and application of this Policy, where reasonably practicable, that will prevent accidents and maintain safety standards.

Portable Ladders and Steps

Portable ladders and steps are to be inspected every six months. The proprietor is to be responsible for ensuring that these inspections are carried out on all wooden and metal ladders and steps. Ladders and Steps should be tagged with the date of the next inspection. This tag should be checked by the user before every use to ensure that an inspection is not overdue. DO NOT use any ladders or steps that do not have a valid, in date, tag.

During inspections of ladders and steps, the following points should be checked:

- a) The stiles for splits or cracks, splintering or warping.
- b) The rungs for undue wear (tap each one with a mallet — a faulty rung gives a dull hollow ring).
- c) The wedges and tie rods for tightness.
- d) The feet for splitting or spreading.
- e) The ropes and fittings on all steps and extension ladders.
- f) Safety stops on triple extension ladders.

Ladders should be placed on a firm, level base, where possible and if used on a sloping surface an adequate safety foot must be used.

The ladder should be lashed or cramped near the top to some convenient secure anchorage to prevent slipping. Only the stiles (i.e. the sides) should be lashed and each stile lashed separately. The correct slope for a ladder is approximately 75 degrees to the horizontal. If no means of securing the top of the ladder is available, either someone must hold the base to prevent slipping or, alternatively, use a safety foot, but this is only permissible up to a height of 6.096m.

Footing ladders is not considered effective longer than 5m. Lashing the foot of ladders may also improve safety. Avoid overloading ladders, only one person should be on the ladder at any one time.

Rest the top of the ladder against a solid surface. It should not rest against plastic gutters or other such surfaces — appropriate equipment, such as ladder stays, should be used instead. Proprietary spreader arms or similar equipment can be used to span windows or other openings.

All ladders must extend at least 1.066m above any landing place or beyond the highest rung from which a person may be working to ensure an adequate handhold.

Guidance Note on the use of Step Ladders

The following notes are for guidance only and the discretion of the tradesman/supervisor should be used to interpret each individual situation.

Any person using the steps should not stand on the top third of the steps.

A second person is required to hold the steps when:

- a) the work necessitates standing on the step ladder at a height of 2m or above.
- b) at a lower height if two hands are required to carry out the work and additional support to the body e.g. the legs, is not possible.

Where the work is in excess of a minor repair a more substantial platform, e.g. a tower scaffold, should be used.

It is not permissible, under any circumstances, to stand on the platform of a “platform pair of steps”.

Scaffold

No scaffolding erected by scaffolding contractors shall be used by directly employed labour, unless a safety certificate has been issued to a Facilities Officer.

Once the scaffold has been erected and certified safe, no part of the structure shall be altered by Trust staff which would render the scaffolding unsafe. A description of the scaffold will be entered into a register and inspected weekly by a Facilities Officer. In external situation, the scaffolding should be inspected after any adverse weather conditions which may affect the scaffolding.

If any person using the scaffold feels that it is unsafe or is not sure, contact the Supervisor or a Facilities Officer, who will arrange for the scaffolding to be inspected.

Safety harnesses **MUST** be used where it is not practicable to provide a standard working platform or gangway with guard rails and toeboards. If used, the belts should always be worn and always secured to a safe anchorage.

Mobile & Free Standing Tower Scaffolds

The height of the working platform on the above scaffolds should not be more than three times the minimum base width when used outside and three and a half times when used inside (including the out-riggers, if fitted).

The working platform must be fully boarded and the boards must be at least 38mm (1.5”) thick.

Guard rails and toeboards are necessary on all four sides with possibly a small break in one side at the stepping off point from the ladder access. Toeboards must be at least 150mm (6”) above the platform level. Guard rails must be between 0.914m (3’) and 1.143m (3’9”) above the platform.

Mobile scaffolds should only be used on ground which is firm and level. Moving scaffold should only be effected by pulling or pushing at the base. The working platform shall be clear of people and materials when the scaffolding is being moved and its path unobstructed. Also check above for overhead power lines and obstructions.

The platform must have a safe means of access on the narrowest side of the tower. Do not climb the frame unless it has built-in ladder sections with rungs not more than 300mm apart and the stiles not more than 480mm apart. If the frame can be used, climb it from the inside. If not, use internal ladder or stairways fixed firmly to the tower. **NEVER** climb up the outside, this may cause the scaffold to over-turn.

The wheels should be turned outwards to provide maximum base dimensions and wheel brakes must be **ON** and locked when the scaffold is in use.

All scaffolding must be inspected by a competent person before being put into use.

If the scaffold is to be in use or left for more than 7 days, a description of the scaffold shall be entered into the prescribed register and the scaffold inspected at least weekly by the appropriate officer.

Trestle Scaffolds

Trestle scaffolds are only intended for light work of a comparatively short duration. It is safe practice to leave the top third of the trestle unused.

Trestles should not be more than 1.371m apart when 38mm boards are used as platforms, or 2.438m when 50mm boards are used. Even with proprietary staging (i.e. Youngman) the span should not exceed 3.048m.

A trestle scaffold must not be used when anyone can fall a distance of more than 4.572m to the ground level from the working platform.

It is recommended that trestles 3.657m high and over should be tied to the building to increase stability.

Working platforms must be at least two scaffold boards wide 440mm. When supported by folding trestles, toeboards and guard rails are not required on the working platform, but if the platform is supported by fixed trestles, toeboards and guard rails are required at all heights in excess of 1.981m.

A separate ladder or pair of steps should always be used for access to the working platform, whenever its height is greater than 1.981m.

Scaffold Boards etc.

All scaffold boards must comply with BS2482. Scaffold boards that do not have a current date stamp must not be used until checked and re-stamped.

All scaffold boards etc., are to be checked every six months. The responsible person for ensuring that these are tested is the company director.

Boards used in platform should be unpainted so that any defects are readily visible and must be checked by the user prior to use. Twisted or split boards should not be used and reported to the office.

All scaffold boards should be free from splits, decay and damage which could affect their strength. Face knots and small clusters of knots should not be more than 57mm across and knots at the edges should not extend into the face more than 38mm.

Roof Working

It is only permissible to carry out work on roofs without full scaffold and safety barriers if the estimate length of time for the job is less than four hours and all other safety measures are in place.

For works longer than four hours it will be necessary to supply a certified scaffold erected by a registered scaffolding company. A "Risk Assessment" will then be prepared and a "Permit to Work" issued to ourselves (and any sub-contractor) prior to commencement of works. A copy of the risk assessment will be forwarded to the client.