



Working at Height Summary

Introduction

Falls from height are one of the biggest causes of workplace fatalities and major injuries. Common causes are falls from ladders and through fragile roofs. The purpose of the *Work at Height Regulations 2005* is to prevent death and injury from a fall from height.

What are the most common causes of accidents when working at height?

Roof work is high risk, and falls from roofs, through fragile roofs, and roof lights are one of the most common causes of workplace deaths and serious injury. As well as during the construction phase of the building, these accidents can also occur on roofs of factories, warehouses and farm buildings when roof repair work or cleaning is being undertaken.

The following products or substrates are or are likely to be fragile:

- Roof lights.
- Liner panels on built-up cladded roofs.
- Non-reinforced fibre cement sheets.
- Corroded metal sheets.
- Glass (*including wired glass*).
- Water damaged chipboard.
- Slates and tiles.
- Woodwool slabs on flat roofs.
- Stramit slabs on flat roofs.

Who does the *Working at Height Regulations 2005* apply to?

If you are an employer or you control work at height, for example, working as a roofing contractor, then the regulations apply to you.

How do you comply with these regulations?

Employers and those in control of any work at height activity must make sure work is properly planned, supervised and carried out by competent people. This includes using the right type of equipment for working at height. Work at height means work in any place where there were no precautions in place, a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal injury. For example, you are working at height if you:

- Are working on a ladder or a flat roof.
- Could fall through a fragile surface.
- Could fall through open roof rafters into the loft space or the floor below.

What do you need to consider when planning work at height?

The following are all requirements in law that you need to consider when planning and undertaking work at height.

You must:

- Take account of weather conditions that could compromise worker safety.
- Check that the place (*such as a roof*) where work at height is to be undertaken is safe. Each location where people will work at height needs to be checked every time, before use.
- Stop materials or objects from falling or, if it is not reasonably practicable to prevent objects falling, take suitable and sufficient measures to make sure no one can be injured, for example, use exclusion zones to keep people away or mesh on scaffold to stop materials such as bricks falling off.
- Store materials and objects safely so they won't cause injury if they are disturbed or collapse.
- Plan for emergencies and rescue, e.g. agree a set procedure for evacuation. Think about foreseeable situations and make sure employees know the emergency procedures. Don't just rely entirely on the emergency services for rescue in your plan.



Before working at height, you must work through these three simple steps set out in figure 1. **You should consider:**

- Do as much work as possible from the ground.
- Ensure workers can get safely to and from where they are working at height.
- Ensure equipment is suitable, stable, and strong enough for the job, maintained and checked regularly.
- Make sure you don't overload or overreach when working at height.
- Take precautions when working on or near fragile surfaces.
- Provide protection from falling objects.
- Consider your emergency evacuation and rescue procedures.

What measures should you take to help protect people?

Always consider collective protection measures that protect everyone who is at risk before personal protection measures that protect only the individual. Collective protection is equipment that does not require the person working at height to act to be effective, for example, a permanent or temporary guard rail, whereas personal protection is equipment that requires the individual to act to be effective, for example, wearing a safety harness and connecting it correctly.

If you require any further information, advice or guidance regarding your responsibilities when planning work at height, contact the Helpdesk@nfrco.co.uk to speak to a member of the NFRC Technical Team.

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