



Safety & Wellbeing Policy Arrangement

Section 39 – Management of Work at Height

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Section 39 – Work at Heights

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Further guidance on this matter can also be obtained from the safety team at healthandsafety@northlan.gov.uk

Section 39 – Management of Work at Height

1. Introduction

In 2011/12 falls from height were the most common cause of fatalities in the workplace, accounting for almost a quarter of fatal injuries to workers. Falls from height were also responsible for around 374,000 lost working days during the same period and 45 accidents to employees/service users of North Lanarkshire Council (NLC).

It is a work activity that features in every aspect of business undertaken by the council. It could be accessing office shelves, putting up Christmas, opening windows or changing light bulbs.

The Health and Safety Executive have a particular focus on incidents that relate to falling from height and North Lanarkshire Council also wish to reflect the importance this matter has in the day to day management of work activities.

This arrangement section will examine the requirements of the Work at Height Regulations 2005 in order to provide information and advice on the safe use of ladders, step ladders and tower scaffolds.

This arrangement is applicable to all employees and contractors working on behalf of North Lanarkshire Council.

2. Statement

North Lanarkshire Council will endeavour to ensure that employees or others do not work at height where it can be avoided.

Where this is not possible a suitable and sufficient written risk assessment will be undertaken and a safe system of work developed.

Any work at height needs to be properly planned in advance of the work activity, appropriately supervised and carried out in a safe manner. Careful consideration should be given to the selection and use of work equipment.

3. Responsibilities

Everyone has a role to play in minimising risk and this role is broadly linked to the level of involvement the individual has with the work activity.

Assistant Chief Executives, Heads of Service and Section managers are responsible for ensuring that every effort is made to avoid working at height and ensuring adequate resources are made available to work at height safely.

Line managers and supervisors will be responsible for the authorising and/or issuing of the necessary permits for work, ensuring the provision of information, instruction and training linked to an effective risk assessment and safe system of work.

Line managers and supervisors will also need to ensure that all the equipment is appropriate for use and adequately maintained.

All employees that work at height will have their own responsibilities and will be expected to follow their training and the provided safe systems of work. Employees will also have a responsibility to inform their line manager of any equipment faults, environmental concerns or personal matters that may impinge on their ability to perform the work task safely and in accordance with the safe system(s) of work provided.

4. Systems for Working at Height (Incorporating permit to work)

In the event that work at height cannot be avoided, a suitable and sufficient risk assessment must be carried out and a written safe system of work developed, including the provision of emergency procedures.

Part of the system of controls used to manage work at height may well include the use of a permit to work. A permit to work is a documented process that helps to ensure the correct steps of a system of work have been completed. It aims to ensure all persons that need to know about the work have been informed about the start and completion of an activity. In relation to work at height two particular permits may well be relevant namely the general permissions permit and the roof work permit. Other permits exist and may well be appropriate depending on the nature of the work activity being undertaken.

5 Assessing the risks

The legislation defines work at height as work in any place, including a place at or below ground level where, if measures required by the regulations are not taken, a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal injury.

Work at height will also apply to the process of gaining access to or egress from such place while at work, except by a staircase in a permanent workplace.

This broad definition can make it difficult to provide advice on all possible work activities and it is therefore necessary to provide guidance principals that line managers will apply to specific situations. The starting point, in any circumstance, will be the application of the risk assessment process and the consideration of the hierarchy of controls, in other words the risk should be eliminated by not doing the work at height (see IS30 – Working at Height Flowchart).

When assessing the risks, use must be made of all the information available about the work to be carried out. All foreseeable hazards and risks must be considered in advance and a range of issues may need to be considered. Working at height can be captured within the general risk assessment for ongoing work activities however there are some circumstances where a stand alone assessment may be preferable. Appendix 1 provides specific guidance on the risk assessment process as it relates to working at height. The form follows the format used by those trained in general risk assessment making it appropriate to use general risk assessors with a knowledge of the proposed work activity to complete working at height risk assessments.

Work at height can include, but is not exclusively limited to:

- working at ground level adjacent to an excavation;
- working on roofs;
- working from a ladder;
- working over or adjacent to open water;
- erecting, dismantling or working from scaffold towers;
- working with powered access equipment.

The issues outlined within appendix 1 need to be considered when evaluating risk however the following broad headings offer an example of the typical issues involved:

- the location in relation to the presence of hazards such as open excavations, open water etc;
- the working environment with regard to weather or lighting;
- safe means of access and egress;
- lone working;
- condition and stability of work surfaces such as fragile materials, slippery surfaces etc;
- physical capabilities of the workers such as pregnancy or vertigo sufferers;
- the equipment to be used and its inspection;
- falling objects;
- prevention of access by unauthorised persons.

The risk assessment must be recorded on an approved NLC risk assessment form by a person who is competent to do so. This must be signed by the assessor and by the line manager or head of establishment.

The line manager must keep a copy of the assessment in their establishment records.

It is recognised that in gathering information for an assessment, managers may need additional support. Such support is available from Service Health and Safety teams.

Access Equipment

Whilst there are many circumstances where working at height will be from relatively flat and stable work areas e.g. a roof, it is also equally possible that working at height will relate to the use of equipment to access equipment/areas that are, by their nature, difficult to access e.g. street lighting, alarm boxes or windows.

The type of access equipment must therefore feature within the assessment process to ensure the most appropriate type is being used.

Ladders & Step Ladders

Ladders and Step ladders come in different sizes and each will be more suited to some tasks than others. They should comply with the correct British Standard and be in good condition. IS8 - Safe Use of ladders and step ladders give more detailed information on the use of such equipment.

Alloy Towers

Tower scaffolding can provide a useful working platform in a relatively short period of time. The construction process brings with it its own risks. As each level is added there is potential for the erection team to be exposed to unguarded drops. For this reason it is important that only those that are suitably trained erect and maintain a scaffold tower.

Powered access

The use of powered access equipment continues to grow and the time saving benefits become more and more recognised. A number of different types exist and each requires its own level of understanding and training. An understanding of the capabilities and limitations of each is required before its use can be sanctioned within a safe system of work. Examples of such equipment include:

- Vertical Masts;
- Scissor Lifts;
- Articulated Booms;
- Articulated Booms;
- Telescopic Booms;
- Specialist Vehicle Mounted Machines.

6. Developing a Safe System of Work

The development of a written safe system of work relies on the information gathered during the risk assessment process being used to construct a document which will detail specific procedures for employees who are carrying out the work.

This will include all of the risk control measures and the reason for their application e.g. the need to use ladder fixing points. It will also detail, where necessary:

- The means for preventing unauthorised access to the area underneath the work being carried out;
- The need for relevant permits to work;
- Any supervision that may be necessary;
- Any weather conditions that workers may be exposed to e.g. icy roofs, slippery surfaces in the rain, wind;

- Any emergency or rescue conditions e.g. it is not acceptable just to rely on the emergency services, this needs to be covered in the risk assessment and planned prior to the work being carried out.

Specific guidance is given within AS40 “Permits to Work” on some of the procedures to be followed for roof work. Paragraph 8 also provides details of further guidance that can be utilised to help develop systems or work.

N.B. If fall arrest equipment is being considered within a system of work then it should be noted that it must be considered as the last option in the hierarchy of control. Collective protection measures, e.g. guard rails, should be deployed in the first instance rather than personal protection.

7. Training

Training will be required for all operatives required to work at height, the managers or supervisors who issue permits to work and those who undertake risk assessments. This will enable them to be competent and confident with procedures, legislation and equipment associated with working at height.

Training may also include the use of ladders, erection and use of scaffold or use of a cherry picker or other access methods. The provision of such training must be recorded.

There is a legal necessity to inform employees of the findings of any risk assessments undertaken. This obligation is normally based on the safe system of work constructed on the outcomes of the risk assessment. The safe system of work should form the basis of the training given to those intending to be involved in the work at height and records of the training provision must be kept and copies kept with the onsite documentation.

8. Resources

A range of support documents exist from a range of organisations, these are potential sources of relevant and detailed information. Some of these have been listed below.

HSE Resources (www.hse.gov.uk).

[Safety warning for those using fixed rail fall arrest systems](#)

[A brief guide to the Working at Height Regulations](#)

[First aid management for harness suspension when working at height](#)

[Guide on the safe use of ladders and stepladders \(INDG402\)](#)

[ACOLAR and LOLER - How they apply to rope access](#)

[Toolbox Talk - Ladders etc \(INDG403\)](#)

[Pocket card \(INDG405\)](#) This pocket card is also available in [other languages](#).

Working at Heights Safety Association (www.wahsa.co.uk)

[Technical Guidance Note 1 - “Considerations for the use of personal fall protection equipment”](#)

[Technical Guidance Note 4 – “Guidance on the use of single and twin energy absorbing lanyards”](#)

Working at Height Risk Assessment

Whilst it is feasible to use the general risk assessment form to undertake an assessment of work at height, the attached subject specific risk assessment form uses the same format together with a height specific aide memoire and should ideally be used for this purpose. The aide memoire aims to help ensure these principal factors are effectively considered along with any activity specific issues. Guidance on each of the principal factors is given below although it should not be considered a definitive list.

The overall aim of the assessment process is to ensure that the risk of a fall to individuals working at height is removed. A fall from height should not be possible.

Electricity

There can often be power lines of various types running at height through a workplace. It must never be assumed that they are telephone cables and full consideration must be given to any cables found in or around the workspace. It should also be noted that ladders, scaffold or other items of equipment may be conductive in nature and that the risk of them becoming live should be considered in any assessment

There will be a need to consider if power cables exist behind structures that are perhaps being drilled or dismantled in some way.

Fire/ Explosion

Will the work at height increase the risk of fire or explosion? Use of the hot work permit should be made to ensure these risks are minimised.

It is also essential that the equipment and arrangements being used to permit the work at height to take place do not interfere with the fire evacuation or prevention processes within the wider workplace(s). If this does occur then specific procedures need to be developed in conjunction with the head of establishment to ensure evacuation and prevention standards are maintained.

Fragile Surfaces

Roof materials such as corrugated asbestos sheeting, plastic sheeting and canvas cannot be considered safe platforms from which to work

Roof lights and other platform openings need to be protected from persons falling through them.

Handling /Lifting

Getting equipment to and from the location of work (i.e. at the height it is required) can present a range of risks, these need to be evaluated and appropriate action taken to ensure risks are minimised. There is often a temptation to carry equipment up a ladder for example, however this often prevents three points of contact being maintained during the climb and is considered to be bad practice. Some elevated platforms are not designed to lift loads and they will only operate within safe lifting limits. This needs to be considered.

Health/Hygiene

Whilst working at height there will need to be appropriate thought given to any health or hygiene issues that may be present, for example bird droppings or stagnant water etc. It may be that a range of chemical substances are present and will need a specific assessment prior to the commencement of work. The health of those likely to undertake the work should also be considered.

If you are unsure about health hazards that may exist seek advice from the relevant Service Health and Safety team.

Machinery

Consider not only risks that may come from the machinery that is being used to allow you to work at height, but also the risks that may come from machinery that may be in the vicinity of your intended work area. Equipment that may work intermittently can often be forgotten about, so it is important to consider all machines or work equipment.

Moving/ Falling Objects

Consider the potential for items to fall from your work location, they may be blown by the wind, dropped or they may simply come loose but in any event it is critical that steps are taken to minimise the damage such a fall may have.

Items falling on to you during the ascent, descent or whilst working in the area should also be considered during the assessment of the task.

Noise/Vibration

Consider the effects of any noise or vibration generated by the work activity, or generated by equipment in and around the work area. For example working close to a fire alarm sounder could cause someone to be startled should it go off, or damage their hearing if they are in very close proximity to it.

People

There is a need to consider the people that may be involved directly or indirectly in the access process. This could include people with certain

medical conditions, unauthorised persons such as children or visitors/inspection staff from other organisations.

Platforms/Access/Siting

Consideration needs to be given to the locations being used to support access to the work location. Ground conditions, effects of weather, ability to tie off the equipment, safe working loads and overhead obstructions are a few of the issues that may cause concerns when siting the access equipment.

Rescue/Emergency

In any work at height situation, consideration needs to be given to a range of rescue and emergency situations. These will often be influenced by the proposed work location, the activity itself and a range of other local factors. It should include:

- How a work location can be advised of an emergency elsewhere in the vicinity of the work activity;
- How other work locations in the vicinity can be advised of an emergency associated with the work at height;
- How someone who may be trapped, injured or suspended could be rescued (there should not be a reliance on the Fire and Rescue Service to undertake such rescue work).

Slip/trip

The areas around the work location need to be assessed for the potential for slips and trips. This can be especially important if the potential for these to occur is at height.

Traffic

Consider the traffic in and around the work area. This can be pedestrian or vehicular traffic as both can collide or interfere with the access equipment or other aspects of the work activity. Such interference, accidental or intentional should be considered within the overall assessment process and steps taken to reduce the impact of any foreseeable scenarios.

Temperature

The temperature within the proposed work area can be affected by a range of factors. This could include weather, processes around the area or work processes being undertaken as part of the work at height. Prolonged exposure to temperature extremes can cause serious health issues and steps need to be taken to reduce any potential impact.

Tools/ Work Equipment

When undertaking an assessment of the work at height there needs to be thought given to how the work equipment and materials are going to be transported to the area of work. Additionally the security of the equipment should be considered.

Training/Experience

In order to reduce the risk of injury it is important that all those involved in the work are suitably trained and experienced. As well as the need to consider the training for the equipment and processes there needs to be evidence that those involved have been made aware of the system of work agreed for the task in hand.

Unprotected Edges

It should not be possible for anyone to access an unprotected edge. Barriers, fall prevention or other mechanisms need to be put in place to prevent anyone coming within 2 metres of such an edge.

Violence/ Lone Working

This factor needs to consider the scope for safety issues to develop from any interactions with people around the workplace. Additionally where someone may be working on their own then this must also be evaluated for any significant risks.

Weather/ Environment

Wind, rain, snow, sunshine can all have detrimental effects on the work activity and thus it is important to consider the safety implications from the likely conditions that may develop. Other environmental conditions should also be considered, this could include, for example, ground contamination, vegetation or pollutants.

Workplace

This factor may well have been covered in a few of the preceding ones, however there is a need to evaluate the risks that may have been incorporated into the task from the surrounding workplace, this could be associated with the indigenous processes, the physical layout the people using the workplace or other issues.

Others

There can often be other local factors that will contribute to the overall risk associated with a task. This might be linked to location or the specialised nature of the indigenous work. Any factors identified should be recorded and the assessment prepared to highlight the concerns together with the proposed control measures.

minor illness, eye injury) = 3, **Minor** (Laceration sprains/strains, mild health effects) = 2, **Insignificant** (scratch, minor cut/bruise) = 1



Safe System of Work

This system of work is designed to compliment the risk assessment(s) developed in response to identified work activities. Prior to undertaking the related work activity it is important to ensure all the required instruction and training has been completed and any identified equipment is in place and operational.

Detail

Linked Risk Assessment(s)
(Text Description)

Service:

Section:

Work Activity Description:

Training (Training to be carried out before task commences)

This Safe System of Work is written in conjunction with above Risk Assessment(s) - Reference Number (s) _____ (if used).

If the risk assessment is changed or reviewed then this safe system of work will also require to be amended/reviewed as necessary.

This information should be used in conjunction with any professional and Service based training that employees have received.

This information must not be used as a substitute for training. All training for operators must be recorded and records available for inspection.

System

Equipment and materials required to carry out this task:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Method:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Related Documentation:

(i.e. Manual handling assessment, DSE assessment, ACOP's etc.)

Additional Comments:

Administration

This SSOW prepared by: _____ Date: _____

Record of Training (continue in separate training log as necessary)

Name	Date	Comment	Signature

Replicated from HSF50 – Safe System of Work Template

Working at Height – Employee Information Sheet

In 2003/04 falling from height accounted for 39 fatal accidents at work and nearly 4000 major injuries. These figures were instrumental in the preparation and introduction of the Work at Height Regulations in 2005. Falls from height remain the single biggest cause of workplace deaths and one of the main causes of major injury.

North Lanarkshire Council strives to ensure mechanisms are in place to prevent deaths and injuries caused by falls at work.

What is work at height?

“A place is ‘at height’ if a person could be injured falling from it, even if it is at or below ground level”.

Together we must do all that is reasonably practicable to prevent anyone falling in a manner that may cause injury or harm.

The legislation places an expectation on organisations to:

- Avoid work at height where they can;
- Use work equipment or other measures to prevent falls where they cannot avoid working at height;
- Where they cannot eliminate the risk of a fall, use work equipment or other measures to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall should one occur.

In order to achieve this, the regulations encourage the Council to ensure that:

- All work at height is properly planned and organised.
- All work at height takes account of weather conditions that could endanger health and safety.
- Those involved in work at height are trained and competent.
- The place where the work at height is done is safe.
- Equipment for work at height is appropriately inspected.
- The risks from fragile surfaces are properly controlled.
- The risks from falling objects are properly controlled.

A number of actions have been taken by the Council to ensure resources exist to allow managers and other employees to assess the risks associated with working at height and implement effective systems of work that will reduce, so far as is reasonably practicable the risk to health, safety or welfare.

If you are working at height (above or below ground) speak to your manager about the controls that are in place to help keep you safe. Remember to use the training you have been given and follow the system of work provided.

Specific guidance exists on the topic that includes focussed risk assessment guidance and information on the use of access equipment.

Other Resources

Health and Safety Training – Working at Height
(Online Awareness Training)

Health and Safety Training – Safe Use of Ladders and Step Ladders
(Practical Course)

Health and Safety Training –Using Equipment to Access Heights
(Tool Box Talk)

GD23 – Working at Height - Prevention of Injury

IS8 - Safe use of Ladders and Stepladders

IS30 – Working at Height Flowchart

(Extract from IS67 – Working at Height – An Introduction)

Impact Assessments

Document Title: Arrangement Section 39 –Working at Height

Date: 01 March 2017

Review Date: As circumstances dictate

Environmental Impact Assessment: This document has been assessed for significant environmental impact; no detrimental impact has been identified.

Equality Impact Assessment: This document has been assessed for significant equality implications; no significant issues have been identified.

General Comments: This document is the arrangement section relating to the management of potential hazardous related to working at height and is associated with the Council's health and safety policy required by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The general aim of the council is to ensure a healthy and safe working environment for all persons working for, or make use of, Council Services. Nothing in the document serves to have any negative impact on the above issues and indeed, in general, this and associated documents will encourage positive consideration of the associated factors to ensure all members of the workforce and community are afforded access to the same safe and healthy workplace.