

# Simply Safety: Work At Height

## Work at Height – falls are an issue for all.

Working at height carries the risk of a fall which can result in serious injury.

But working at height isn't just an issue for the construction industry. People carry out work at height in offices and shops, in factories and on farms. Plumbers and electricians use stepladders to carry out work at height while classroom assistants and teachers pin up children's work. Shop assistants need to retrieve stock from high shelves and delivery drivers are constantly climbing into the back of their 7.5 tonne vehicle or using the tail lift while Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) drivers clamber over the loads on their vehicles.

It is essential to identify the risk and adopt the correct approach to manage and minimise the chance of a fall.

## Key facts and tips on work at height

### • Identify the issues – ask yourself the following

Could a person fall whilst doing the job and how far could they fall?

Could a person be injured if they fell and how seriously would they be injured?

Have the risks been assessed? Is there another way of doing the task to eliminate the risk of a fall, for example working at ground level using long-handled tools?

### • Risky tasks

Many tasks require people to work at height – some obvious, some less so. Employers need to identify any work that carries a risk of falling.

Examples include:

- Building maintenance such as cleaning windows, repairing roofs, erecting signs and clearing leaves from gutters
- Installing and cleaning machinery
- Unloading vehicles such as Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs).

Sometimes the work can be done safely at ground level. In other cases a safe method of working at height must be established. Where possible, protect employees collectively. This can be done by installing guardrails, steps and fixed access platforms. If not suitable, personal protection such as using a harness or lanyard can minimise risk for individuals.

### • Minimising risk

Employees will always find a way to work at height, making use of chairs, a desk or a box of paper to gain those extra few centimetres of height when putting up the Christmas decorations or changing a light bulb. Employees must be trained to appreciate and understand the risks associated with working at height and understand the importance of using the correct means of access.

### • Ladders, Stepladders and Kicksteps

There are many myths surrounding the use of such equipment. Their use is not banned, nor are they subject to any legal restriction. However, they carry a significant risk of a person falling unless they are used properly and safely. There are better and safer means and these should be used wherever possible.

Simply Safety Sheets are intended to provide a short and simple introduction to the key issues facing business. For more information go to [www.norwichunion.com/RiskManager](http://www.norwichunion.com/RiskManager) and for consultancy, training courses and more information go to Norwich Union's risk management subsidiary Norwich Union Risk Services [www.nurs.co.uk](http://www.nurs.co.uk)

Simply Safety information sheets are designed to give general information on risk management topics. Readers should take specific advice when dealing with particular situations.

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