

INSTRUCTION 31

WORKING-AT-HEIGHT

References:

- A. Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
- B. Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (as amended).
- C. Working-at-height Regulations (as amended).
- D. Annex O to this policy

Introduction

31.1 Statistics show that falls from height are the most common cause of fatal injury and the second most common cause of major injury to employees. The Council will take all reasonable steps to provide a safe working environment for all employees who may be affected by work-at-height activities.

31.2 The organisation shall provide a safe system of work that will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the necessary preventive and protective measures to prevent falls of persons or materials from the workplace. We will require employees and any other persons involved in the work activity to co-operate in the implementation of this policy.

Requirements

31.3 The Regulations require the following:

- All work-at-height is properly planned and organised;
- Those involved in work-at-height are competent;
- The risks from work-at-height are assessed and appropriate work equipment is selected and used;
- The risks from fragile surfaces are properly controlled;
- Equipment for work-at-height is properly inspected and maintained.

31.4 There is a simple hierarchy for managing and selecting equipment for work-at-height:

- Avoid work-at-height wherever possible;
- Use work equipment or other measures to prevent falls where working-at-height cannot be avoided;
- Where the risk of a fall cannot be eliminated, use work equipment or other measures to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall should one occur.

31.5 The Regulations include a number of schedules giving detailed requirements for existing places of work and means of access for work-at-height; for collective fall prevention (e.g. guardrails and working platforms); for collective fall arrest (e.g. nets, airbags etc.); for personal fall protection (e.g. work restraints, fall arrest and rope access) and for ladders. Operational information is summarised in Annex O.

Responsibilities

31.6 Manager and supervisors will:

- Ensure that all work activities that involve work-at-height are identified this includes working from vehicles;
- Eliminate the need to undertake work-at-height whenever it is reasonably practicable to do so;
- Undertake risk assessment for those activities where work-at-height cannot be eliminated and reduce the level of risk, so far as is reasonably practicable;
- Provide all the necessary equipment to allow safe access to and egress from the place of work;
- Provide all the necessary equipment to ensure adequate lighting and protection from adverse weather conditions;
- Provide suitable plant to enable the materials used or created in the course of the work to be safely lifted to and from the workplace and stored there if necessary;
- Ensure that any working platform and its supporting structures are selected and/or designed in accordance with current standards;
- Make provisions for regular inspections of all equipment required for working-at-height;
- Ensure that all persons who have to undertake work-at-height are trained and competent to do so;
- Require any contractors from whom they procure services to comply with this policy.

31.7 Employees will:

- Comply with all instruction and training that is provided in work-at-height activities;
- Take appropriate steps to ensure their own health and safety is not put at risk when working-at-height;
- Inspect equipment before use.
- Report any perceived shortcoming in the arrangements for managing the risks associated with working-at-height.

Inspection and Maintenance.

31.8 All work-at-height equipment must be inspected at least every 6 months by a competent person, which includes:

- Ladders and step ladders;
- Harnesses;
- Fall restraint/arrest lanyards;
- Roof safety systems.

31.9 Inspections and maintenance are to be carried out in accordance with manufacturer's instructions and recorded in an appropriate register.