

Toolbox Talks Work at height

Reason

Around 40% of major injuries on construction sites involve falls from heights.

Why

More than 50% of falls from height end in death. Don't end up as a statistic.

Outline

This talk covers what you need to think about and do, before and during working at height.

Details

Before working at height

- Ladders and stepladders are only for light work of a short duration and where there is a low risk of falling.
- Ideally other, safer access equipment will be provided.
- Roof-edge barriers (or scaffolds) must be erected therefore, preventing the risk of people and materials falling from height.
- Access ladders must extend at least one meter (5 rungs) above the stepping-off point and must be secured.
- Fragile surfaces (such as asbestos cement roof sheets and skylights) must be identified with signs and measures taken to stop you falling through.
- Ladders must be rested at the correct angle (one unit out to four units up).

Hazards

- Any fall could result in serious injury, so a means of collective fall protection should be used (for example guard-rails and toe-boards) before selecting PPE, and suitable access equipment must be installed and/or used.
- Adverse weather conditions must be anticipated and suitable precautions taken: beware of wet, windy or icy weather.
- Too much material on a working platform can make access difficult or make the scaffold unstable.
- Don't allow rubbish to accumulate. Use a chute or lower materials properly.

Safe working on roofs

- Only competent operatives may be used for roofing works.

- A safe system of work must be devised and implemented where the roof would otherwise be liable to collapse under a person's weight: usually a temporary platform is used.
- If edge protection or a soft-landing system cannot be used, it may be necessary to use a harness and lanyard. A secure anchorage point and training will be necessary.
- Bitumen boilers require a drip tray and fire extinguisher.
- Openings must be covered or guarded; if removed for any reason, replace as soon as practical.

Questions

- What should be identified before work at height starts?
- Above what height must edge protection, toe-boards and guard-rails be erected?
- When might a temporary platform be used?
- How far should ladders extend above a stepping-off point?

