



**Code of Practice**

**Working at Height**

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# Working at Height

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Falls from height remain the single biggest cause of workplace deaths and one of the main causes of major injury. (In 2003/4 falls from height accounted for 67 fatal accidents at work and nearly 4000 major injuries).
- 1.2. The Work at Height Regulations 2005 ('the Regulations') apply to all work at height where there is a risk of a fall liable to cause personal injury. These Regulations apply to all staff who work at height.
- 1.3. This Code of Practice offers advice to managers and supervisor on what needs to be done to comply with the Regulations. In addition, the Code is of importance to all members of staff who work at height, as there is a duty on staff to ensure that they work safely, and follow the directions of their managers and supervisors.
- 1.4. The Regulations define a place as 'at height' if a person could be injured falling from it, even if it is at or below ground level.
- 1.5. 'Work' includes moving around at a place of work (except by a staircase in a permanent workplace) but not travel to or from a place of work.
- 1.6. The Regulations apply to all work at height where there is a risk of a fall liable to cause personal injury. The Regulations place duties on the University and any person who controls the work of others (e.g. estates managers, building managers or building owners) who may contract the work of others for contractors who work at height to the extent they control the work.
- 1.7. The Regulations do not apply to the provision of paid instruction or leadership in caving or climbing by way of sport, recreation, team building or similar activities.

## 2. Duties of Employers

- 2.1. The University, as an employer, is required to do all that is reasonably practicable to prevent anyone falling in the course of their work. Managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that the appropriate measures are taken to ensure that staff work safely at height.
- 2.2. There is a simple hierarchy for managing and selecting equipment for work at height set out in the Regulations that managers and supervisors within the University should use:

- Managers and supervisors should ensure that staff avoid work at height wherever possible
- Managers and supervisors should ensure that staff use work equipment or other measures to prevent falls where they cannot avoid working at height
- Where the risk of a fall cannot be eliminated, managers and supervisors should ensure that staff use work equipment or other measures to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall should one occur

### Specific Duties

2.3 Under the Regulations, managers and supervisors are to ensure:

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

### 3. Duties of Employees

3.1. All staff are required to report any safety hazard to their supervisors.

3.2. All staff are to use the equipment supplied (including safety devices) properly, following any training and instruction (unless you think that would be unsafe, in which case you should seek further instructions from your supervisor before continuing).

### 4 Risk Assessments

4.1. It is the responsibility of the head of department to ensure all Work at Height is given due consideration in the department's work activity Risk Assessment process.

4.2. The purpose of the risk assessment process is to identify

(a) the control measures required to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall should one occur; and

(b) the work equipment required (i.e. kick stools, ladders, steps, fall arrest equipment etc.),

(c) the appropriate training in the safe use of the equipment.

4.3. Advice on the preparation of University Risk Assessments is found at <http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/support/health-safety/health-and-safety/policies-and-forms.asp>

4.4. All work activities that require work to be carried out at height are to be assessed with due consideration being given to:

- Activity – is the work at height necessary? If not, avoid it
- Equipment used (stepladders, ladders, kick stools etc.) – Is this equipment suitable for purpose and suitably maintained?
- Training – Have all staff received training in the use of this equipment?
- Risk Assessment – Are all staff involved with working at height, aware of the risk assessments and all associated control measures?

## 5 Hazards

5.1. Typical hazards associated with working at height include:

- Staff using inappropriate equipment for the purpose of working at height, i.e. furniture, damaged/poorly maintained access equipment
- Falling from heights or falling through fragile roof materials
- Falling objects and people striking those working below, passing pedestrians or traffic
- Slipping or collapsing access equipment such as ladders, trestles, scaffolds etc.
- Slips trips and falls on elevated access ways

## 6. Control Measures

6.1. The Regulations specify a general hierarchy for managing and selecting equipment for work at height as outlined in section 2.2, typical control measures to meet these requirements include:

- Avoiding work at height where possible
- Using equipment or other measures to prevent falls where work at height cannot be avoided
- Using equipment or other measures to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall should one occur, in the cases where the risk of a fall cannot be eliminated

6.2. Other control measures that managers and supervisors might include in their risk assessment:

- Preventing unauthorised access to roofs, roof spaces, chimney stacks and outdoor activity equipment etc.

- Ensure all staff are suitably trained in the safe use of access and safety equipment
  - Restrict the use of ladders to only light work of short duration, where there is no safe alternative. (Staff must be instructed not to over-reach on ladders and platforms)
  - Ensure ladders are inclined at 75 degrees (ratio of 1:4) and that they are secured top and bottom
  - Only purpose-made roof ladders or crawling boards are used for roof work
  - All ladders, steps, trestles and other equipment used specifically for working at height must be recorded in a department log
  - All broken or damaged equipment must be removed from service, destroyed and the log amended accordingly
  - Makeshift ladders or access equipment is not to be used under any circumstances
  - All equipment must be maintained and inspected in accordance with the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1989
  - Ensure loading limits for access equipment is not exceeded
- 6.3. Work involving working at height should be undertaken using written working method statements and risk assessments.

## **7. Training**

- 7.1. All staff required to use work equipment, including equipment for working at height, must first be trained in the safe use of the equipment.
- 7.2. Owing to the range of equipment available and the diversity of tasks to be undertaken by staff it is not appropriate for training to be specified here. It is the responsibility of the relevant manager or supervisor to ensure staff has received suitable training in the use of work equipment.
- 7.3. Heads of Departments or department managers are advised to contact the Staff Development Office regarding the training courses available.

## **8. Contractors.**

- 8.1. The requirements apply to contractors as well as employees. Contractors must be given information on the Permit to Work system, fire precautions and prohibited areas of roofs, towers, chimney stacks etc.
- 8.2. All contractors working on site are required to comply with the Universities Permit to Work system.
- 8.3. No contractors are permitted to work at height on University premises without first providing a suitable risk assessment and/or method statement in accordance with the Permit to Work policy.