

1 PURPOSE

This requirement describes the process for identifying hazards, assessing risk and controlling risk associated with working at heights.

2 SCOPE

This requirement applies to all staff, students, contractors and other personnel working at heights at workplaces under the management or control of the University of Melbourne.

Note: Whilst this requirement does not include the exemptions as outlined in the definition “working at heights” there is an obligation to apply risk management principles to eliminate and/or reduce the risk associated with these activities.

Note: Whilst this requirement does not include falls of less than two metres, there is an obligation to apply risk management principles to eliminate and/or reduce the risk associated with these activities.

3 DEFINITIONS

Fall

Where a person has an involuntary fall of more than two metres.

Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017 (Vic)

Fall arrest system

A system that will safely stop a person falling an uncontrolled distance and reduce the impact of the fall. Examples include; safety nets, catch platforms; fall arrest harnesses.

Passive fall prevention device

A passive fall prevention device is materials or equipment or a combination thereof that is designed for preventing falls and, after initial installation, does not require any ongoing adjustment, alteration or operation by any person to ensure the device’s integrity. Examples include:

- elevated work platforms: fixed work platforms, cherry pickers, step platforms, building maintenance units;
- scaffolding;
- guard railing;
- safety mesh;
- special forklifts such as order picking forklifts, purlin trolleys.

WorkSafe Victoria

Work positioning system/fall restraint

A system that uses equipment that enables a person to work supported in a harness under tension in such a way that a fall is prevented. Examples include an industrial rope access system or travel restraint

Working at heights

Where a person is working near an unprotected edge which could result in the person falling two metres or more. Some examples include:

- any plant or structure being constructed, demolished, inspected, repaired
- fragile or potential unstable surface
- the use of equipment to gain access to an elevated level
- a sloping or slippery surface
- in close proximity to an edge
- in close proximity of a hole, shaft or pit which is of sufficient dimensions for a person to fall in

Exemptions to working at heights include:

- a. activities that are carried out under the control or management of an employer including:
 - (i) the performance of stunt work;
 - (ii) the performance of acrobatics;
 - (iii) a theatrical performance;
 - (iv) a sporting or athletic activity;
 - (v) the riding of a bicycle, motorcycle or all-terrain vehicle;
 - (vi) horse riding;
 - (vii) rock climbing, recreational abseiling or any other similar activities;
- b. a task that is undertaken on those parts of a building or structure (including stairs, fixed ladders, ramps and balconies) that:
 - (i) comply with any applicable requirements of AS 1657;
 - (ii) comply with any applicable requirements of the *Building Regulations 2006* (Vic); and
 - (iii) are used for the purpose for which they were designed, including for entry and exit;
- c. any activity determined by WorkSafe.

4 REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Guidance material

The Associate Director, Health & Safety shall publish and maintain guidance material for working at heights and the prevention of falls. The guidance material will take into account the requirements of University of Melbourne, processes and relevant legislation and establish the University's default standards for all working at heights.

4.2 Risk assessment

The Head of School/Division shall ensure that an appropriate risk assessment has been conducted and documented, and controls have been implemented to mitigate the risk of falling.

The manager/supervisor shall ensure that risk assessments are completed and documented in consultation with the staff and the health and safety representative (HSR), and are updated as appropriate. The risk assessment shall take into account the:

- location and physical structure (where applicable) associated with the height;
- type of risk control(s) adopted as outlined in Section 4.3;
- type of activity; and
- conditions and surroundings that could change affecting the activity and subsequent controls.

Where plant or other equipment is involved such as cooling towers on rooftops, appropriate risk assessments and controls must be evaluated to ensure that no other risks are encountered.

4.3 Risk control

The manager/supervisor shall ensure risk controls are documented in consultation with staff and the HSR. The hierarchy of control shall be used to reduce the risk of falls. This includes:

- undertake the activity from the ground or from a solid structure
- use a passive fall prevention device
- use work positioning system/fall restraint
- use a fall arrest system; and/or
- where none of the above measures are reasonably practicable or do not minimise the risk of a fall then a fixed or portable ladder or administrative control can be used.

In many cases a combination of controls will be required to eliminate or reduce the risk of a fall.

4.4 Training

The manager/supervisor shall ensure staff working at heights have adequate information, instruction and training to undertake the activity safely.

The extent and type of information, instruction and training required will depend on the severity of the hazard and the risk involved. It will also depend on the level of skill required to operate or use the control measure.

The training should be relevant to the risks and controls associated with the activity. Therefore it should include:

- the type of fall hazards;
- the risk of injury associated with the task;
- the control measures required and how to implement them properly, and
- the actions to take if there is an incident.

4.5 Working on ladders

For all work at heights, industrial grade ladders that comply with AS 1892 (series) must be used.

The requirements include and are not limited to:

- a load rating (120 kg minimum);
- appropriate for the task to be undertaken;
- erected in the correct manner; and
- maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions.

A risk assessment must be undertaken prior to use of a ladder and take into account the above points.

4.6 Emergency equipment

The Head of School/Division must ensure that emergency procedures are in place for the rescue of a person and for the provision of first aid.

Emergency procedures must take into account:

- location and physical structure (where applicable) associated with the height;
- type of risk control(s) adopted as outlined in Section 4.3;
- type of activity; and
- conditions and surroundings that could change affecting the activity and subsequent controls.

5 REFERENCES

Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017 (Vic)

AS 1657: Fixed platforms, walkways, stairways and ladders—Design, construction and installation

AS 1892 Portable ladders (series)

Basic steps to preventing falls from heights (WorkSafe Victoria)

Prevention of falls – Ladders (WorkSafe Victoria)

Managing the risks of falls at workplaces Code of practice (Safe Work Australia [Cth])

6 RESPONSIBILITIES

Head of School/Division

Associate Director, Health & Safety

Manager/Supervisor

7 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTATION

7.1 Processes

Nil

7.2 Forms

Nil

7.3 Guidance

[Safety Alert – Working at heights and building roof access](#)