

WORKING AT HEIGHTS & BUILDING ROOF ACCESS

Purpose

To reiterate that safe systems of work are required for all work at heights, including:

- planned or scheduled work;
- urgent or emergency work; and
- on any occasion when access to building roofs is required.



Background

Falls from height can cause permanent and debilitating injuries. The risk of serious injury or death from a fall increases significantly when working at heights of more than two metres. Falls from height can occur from building roofs, skylights, fragile roofing materials, structures, mezzanine floor and ladders.

This Safety Alert has been issued to remind workers and those supervising workers, that accessing roofs and working at heights requires adequate fall from height risk controls. This may include the use of fall-prevention or fall-restraint equipment.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

Access to exposed edges, with a fall risk of more than two metres, without the use of suitable fall-prevention or fall-restraint equipment is prohibited.

Work at heights on roofs and structures can be delayed if more time is necessary to organise the required safe access equipment to control falls from height risks.

Note: It may still be necessary to perform other work to make the area safe. (e.g. evacuate people, isolate services or restrict access)

Requirements for all supervisors/managers of workers accessing roofs

Supervisors and managers (including Contract Managers/Officers and Principals) must inform and supervise workers under their direction/control. This includes ensuring workers understand the requirement to implement fall from height risk controls prior to undertaking work at heights on roofs or structures. Where passive fall protection systems such as full height (>900mm) parapets and/or handrails) are not installed, this may include the use of height access equipment, fall-prevention equipment or fall-restraint equipment.

At no time should workers be required to undertake work at heights without the implementation of suitable fall from heights risks controls.

Requirements for all personnel accessing roofs

All personnel (including contractors, University employees and students or any other person) undertaking work at heights are required to have suitable safe work method statements (SWMS) or risk assessments detailing the safe system of work to be followed.

All contractors carrying out work on University buildings must complete the University's online Contractor Safety Induction, as well as any local inductions that are applicable to the work area.

All contractors carrying out work on University buildings must carry evidence of the online contractor safety induction of completion and photo identification.



Falls from heights under two metres

Falls from heights under two metres can still cause serious injury. Falls from heights under two metres need to be eliminated or controlled so far as is reasonably practicable.

Scaffold - assembly and dismantling

Implementation of suitable fall from heights risk controls is required for scaffold assembly and dismantling. This work is subject to specific guidance from WorkSafe Victoria - [Fall Prevention for Scaffolders](#). All supervisors/managers and workers involved in the assembling and dismantling scaffold are required to implement fall from height risk controls consistent with WorkSafe Victoria guidance.

Other health and safety risks

Work at heights and accessing building roofs may expose workers and other people in the vicinity to other risks. Safe Work Method Statement and Risk Assessments need to take into account:

- Electro-magnetic fields and non-ionising radiation e.g. Mobile phone towers, transmitters and receivers
- Fume cupboard and other exhaust ventilation systems
- Cooling towers
- Materials handling risks, including hazardous manual handling
- Falling objects onto workers and others below
- Working alone or in isolation from others
- Emergency procedures and safe egress
- Weather conditions

Monitoring

Implementation of working at high risk controls will be monitored as part of contractor performance monitoring.

ACTIONS REQUIRED:

1. Review this Safety Alert
2. Assess work activities undertaken by workers under your direction/supervisor for potential fall from height risks.
3. Review the adequacy of your existing safety systems and risk controls and implement corrective actions where necessary.
4. Report any concerns about the adequacy of installed safe access/fall prevention/fall restraint equipment to your University Contract Manager or Supervisor.
5. Communicate this Safety Alert with your workers including employees and subcontractors.
6. Review and update Safe Work Method Statements and Risk Assessments for existing fall from heights risks, including access to University building roofs and structures.