Getting High On Safety Meeting Kit

What’s At Stake

WORKING AT HEIGHT

Working at height refers to any work where a person could potentially fall and injure themselves. A ladder, a roof’s edge, an opening on the floor, and even a loading dock can be considered working at height. In general industry, fall protection is required by OSHA for any height change of 4 feet or more.

Site specific risk assessment

Construction work carried out where there is a risk of a person falling more than 2 metres is deemed high risk construction work and therefore requires a safe work method statement. A safe work method statement is based on a **site specific risk assessment** and includes the measures for eliminating workplace risks or minimising these risks as far as is reasonably practicable. A safe work method statement must be developed in consultation with workers who are carrying out the high risk construction work before the commencement of any construction work’.

What’s the Danger

HAZARD IDENTIFICATION

Identified hazards must be assessed by considering the likelihood of a fall occurring and the severity of any injury that may result. Things to consider when assessing risk might include the height at which the work is to be undertaken, the surface underneath the work area, the potential for slipping on the surfaces, the slope of surfaces, the stability of the structures on which the work will be undertaken, the stability of the ground that work structures are resting on and protection from falling

from open edges where there is a change of level.

EXAMPLES

- work near unprotected open edges of floors or roof.
- work near unguarded holes, penetrations and voids.
- work near unguarded excavations, trenches, shafts, lift wells.
- work from unstable structures (incomplete scaffolding).
- work on, or near (cement sheet roofs, fibreglass roofs, skylight).
- work from unprotected formwork decks.
- Working on trestles.
- Working on a flat roof.
- Erecting false work or formwork.
- Working on a ladder.
- Working at ground level adjacent to an excavation;
- Working on formwork within an excavation.
- Working near or adjacent to fragile materials.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Reduce the risk. Fall protection must be provided for anyone when the risk of a fall from height cannot be eliminated and it is likely that an injury could occur as a result of the fall. However, if the type of work makes it difficult for a worker to be fully aware of the location of the platform edge (for example, welding, oxy acetylene cutting and other work involving restricted vision) fall protection should be provided regardless of height.

Eliminate the hazard. Working on the ground is the most effective method of protecting workers from fall hazards.

- prefabrication of roofs, wall frames and trusses at ground level.
- using tilt-up concrete construction.
- reducing shelving heights to allow access to items from ground level.

Substitute with a safer surface. Work from a solid construction (a

level surface that is structurally capable of supporting workers, material and any other loads.

- temporary work platforms such as properly erected scaffolds or elevated work platforms.
- solidly constructed stairs with fixed handrails.
- even and accessible work surfaces and slopes.
- safe entry and exit points.

Isolate the hazard. Use physical barriers to protect workers from falls.

- perimeter guard railing, generally consisting of a top-rail at least 900mm above the working surface, a mid-rail and a toe board.
- ensuring that openings such as holes in floors are fenced off with secure barriers or covered over with safety mesh or timber sheeting.

Engineering controls.

- “work positioning” systems that position and safely support a worker at the location where the task is to be performed (for example travel restraint systems, industrial rope access systems and drainers’ hoists);
- a fall arrest system, to prevent or reduce the severity of injury if a fall does occur, including catch platforms, industrial safety nets, a lifeline, harness and rope grabs.
- portable ladders.

Administrative controls. Require a high level of training and supervision to be effective. They should generally be used to support other control measures rather than as the sole control measure. Administrative controls include:

- warning signs.
- ‘no-go zones’ (only allowing trained people in certain areas).
- organising and sequencing work so as to not interfere with other jobs.
- safe work instructions and procedures.

Personal protective equipment. Individual fall arrest systems are designed to arrest a falling person safely and their correct use relies on many factors, including the availability of properly engineered anchorage points.

Fall arrest systems and travel restraint systems personal protective equipment, should only be used when other means of providing fall protection, such as scaffolds, guardrails and elevating work platforms have been considered and are not practicable.

GETTING HIGH ON SAFETY OVERVIEW

Workers should try to avoid working at height if at all possible. If they can’t, they should ensure that they use the right equipment and safety procedures for their specific task and ensure their personal workspace is safe.

FINAL WORD

Although there are many hazardous situations that are common to most construction work sites, there are also hazards particular to a specific project or work site. It’s important that safety plans and training programs address the potential hazards specific to project and its site especially working at heights.