

Brixham Town Council



Working at Heights Policy

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Reviewed	
Next Review Date	
Issue Number	V1
Written by	Tracy Hallett, Town Clerk.

Summary

1. A fall from height has sudden and irreversible consequences and can only be prevented by ensuring that each task associated with working at height is carefully planned before deciding if the method of gaining access is appropriate. The overriding principle is to do all that is practicable to prevent anyone falling. Strict adherence to the principles and practices within the Work at Height Regulations 2005, and its Schedules, is the only acceptable solution. The hierarchy of controls to be applied to avoid a fall from height are:
 - Avoid the work at height where possible;
 - If work at height cannot be avoided, use equipment to prevent falls; and
 - Where the risk of a fall cannot be eliminated, use equipment or other measures to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall.

Responsibilities

1. Managers are expected to provide a safe system of work for their staff and to ensure that this policy and associated guidance is implemented within their sections. Each section will need to participate in this safety system to ensure tasks are correctly planned.
2. Staff must report any hazard, use equipment properly, and follow training, information and instruction. If a potentially unsafe situation arises, stop work and seek further instructions. Supervisors must enforce this policy.

Procedures and Practices

3. Work is 'at height' if a person could be injured by falling. This may include work at ground level or in a trench. Town Council employees often have control over work to be carried out at height and they have a duty to check that every reasonable measure is taken to ensure safety. The principle is that they 'must do all that is reasonably practicable to prevent anyone falling'.
4. Before authorising any work at height it is necessary to ensure that the work is properly planned, the workforce is competent and the risks have been properly assessed and controlled. The equipment used must be maintained and inspected and any possibility of falling from height, including through a fragile roof must be prevented. Where the risk of a fall cannot be prevented, the consequences of the fall must be mitigated to a safe level. The planning checks are:
 - No work is done at height if it is reasonably practicable to do it at ground level;
 - All work at height is properly planned, organised and risks assessed;
 - Staff involved at all stages are trained and competent;
 - A plan is made for emergencies and rescue;
 - The place of working at height is safe and the fall distance is minimised;
 - The most suitable equipment is used and it is properly inspected and maintained;
 - The risks from fragile surfaces and falling objects are properly controlled; and
 - Weather conditions are actively considered – postpone the work if safety is compromised.

Identification and amalgamation of work at height

5. All work at height should be organised at the same time as other similar tasks so that access equipment can be procured and used efficiently and effectively. The decision to delay a task until a suitable planned opportunity, e.g. refurbishment, should be actively considered. Tasks such as window cleaning, replacing light bulbs and hanging festive or promotional decorations are not exempt from these constraints.
6. A point of work risk assessment should be completed to consider whether the task requires working at a height, e.g. particularly is a ladder or stepladder required and/or whether the work is above the level normally accessible by the use of a hop-up.

Choice of access equipment

7. Ladders should not be used for working at height until it can be shown that: all other access methods are unsuitable; use of a ladder is safe; and it is the best method of access in that location. Scaffold, tower scaffold, cherry picker and permanent structures should be considered.

MEWP – cherry pickers, etc.

8. Mobile elevating work platforms (MEWP) are a quick and convenient method of temporary access for tasks where it is not intended to provide scaffold or tower scaffolds. Only suitably qualified operators are permitted to operate this equipment.

Scaffold providers

9. To prevent scaffold workers falling from height during the erection and dismantling of scaffold, scaffold providers, used by the Town Council, should conform to the guidance provided by the National Access & Scaffolding Confederation e.g. SG4.05 or similar. Scaffold providers used by the council should be approved using the Partnership's contractor selection process or similar procedure.

Staff who are required to use working platforms, scaffold etc., must ensure that the structure is properly inspected and records are available to confirm this. The structure must be signed off by a competent person.

List of Schedules

10. The regulations have several useful Schedules (appendices). Staff working at height must be fully aware of the content of the relevant schedules. These include:
 - Existing places of work and means of access or egress at height;
 - Collective fall protection (guard rails, toe boards and barriers);
 - Working platforms;
 - Collective fall arrest equipment (nets, airbags etc.);
 - Personal fall arrest (restraint harnesses and ropes);
 - Ladders and step ladders; and
 - Inspection reports for working platforms.

Inspection of items in Schedules 2-6

11. All equipment and each workplace must be the subject of a suitable maintenance and inspection regime. Typically this will include a visual or more rigorous inspection (and appropriate testing) by a competent person:
 - After assembly and installation;
 - Before use (and after use); and
 - At other suitable periods to ensure safety.
12. Any platforms used for construction must be inspected in situ before use and every seven days, or after an accident, damage to equipment (scaffold), or extreme weather conditions.
13. Equipment transferred between workplaces or businesses must be accompanied by appropriate clear certification of the last inspection.

Ladders and stepladders – see Appendix 1

14. Ladders should be chosen for the particular task and are only intended for light infrequent work, of a short duration. Class 1 or BS/EN 131 (Class 2) ladders and stepladders are intended for trade use. The ladder register, held by the Town Council and monitored by the Facilities Manager will hold details of inspection procedures as well as records of inspection and maintenance of each ladder and stepladder.
15. A ladder should be at least one metre higher than the highest rung used. The user must be able to reach the task without stretching or leaning out and be able to maintain three-point contact, i.e. one hand and two feet. The ladder must be secured. Improvised stability devices should not be used.
16. Stepladders should be high enough to leave the top three steps unused unless an additional handrail is provided to facilitate use of the top step. The user should not work 'side on' to the work activity.

Fragile surfaces

17. No one should be permitted to work on or near fragile surfaces. If adjacent access is essential, suitable platforms, coverings, guardrails, etc. must be installed to minimise the risk. Any residual risk must be effectively controlled e.g. by reducing the distance and effects of a fall. Approaches to fragile surfaces must be clearly identified with prominent fixed warning signs.

Falling Objects

18. Falling objects present a risk of serious injury and the risk of injury must be prevented. Nothing must be thrown or tipped from height (known as 'bombing'). Items and equipment used at height must be properly stored and secured at all times to prevent the risk of them falling.

Training

19. Everyone involved in the work must be trained and competent. This includes involvement in organising, planning and the supply, maintenance and use of equipment. If the risk of falling is not eliminated, staff must be trained to avoid falls and how to minimise injury if they did fall.

Risk Assessments

20. The Facilities Manager and Town Lengthsman Supervisor will undertake risk assessments and monitor them at regular intervals to maintain competence amongst staff.

Medical factors

21. Staff working at height and ladder users must report any medical problems that would affect safety. These may include:

- Recurring dizziness
- Epilepsy
- Psychiatric conditions (including fear of heights)
- Heart or lung conditions
- Significant impaired joint function
- Use of medication that recommends you do not operate machinery
- Alcohol and drug abuse

References

Work at Height Regulations 2005

Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992

The Construction (Design and Management) **Regulations** 2015

Provision and use of Work Equipment Regulations 1992

For additional guidance, visit the HSE Website on www.hse.gov.uk and enter 'Working at Height' in the 'Search' box

Safe Use of Ladders and Stepladders



Do not lean out or take one foot off the ladder



Correct – body within the stiles



Do not use steps 'side on' to the task



Correct – the steps face the task



Correct – not stood on the top three steps