

PLANNING A SAFE APPROACH TO WORKING AT HEIGHT

This fact sheet will help you manage working at height safely.

Start by planning a safe approach. Too many falls from height are caused by a failure to plan and organise work properly.

Planning safe working at height means:

- > identifying the hazards
- > assessing the hazards
- > controlling the hazards
- > monitoring your approach
- > documenting your approach.

1. IDENTIFY THE HAZARDS

Identify any hazards of working at height where someone could fall. Four ways of identifying hazards are:

1. *physical inspections* - walk around the workplace using a checklist to identify and manage hazards
2. *task analysis* - identify the hazards involved in each task of the job
3. *process analysis* - identify hazards at each stage of the production or service delivery process
4. *analysis of accident investigation* - identify hazards and causal factors from investigations involving similar types of work.



2. ASSESS THE HAZARDS

Decide if the hazards you have identified are significant.

How badly harmed someone would be if they fell and how likely a fall could be?

If serious harm could result, then it's a significant hazard.

3. CONTROL THE HAZARDS

Select the best work method to **eliminate, isolate or minimise** (in that order) the risk of the significant hazard. Provide additional training and instruction to keep people safe when working at height.

Effort is in proportion to risk – the greater the risk, the greater the controls. But remember, **doing nothing is not an option.**

Eliminate the hazard of working at height:

- > Use long-handled tools from ground level.
- > Build structures at ground level and lift into position when finished.

Isolate people from the hazard of working at height:

- > Use edge protection.
- > Use a guardrailed work platform (eg scaffold or elevating work platforms).
- > Use a total restraint system to prevent people being near height hazard.

Minimise the distance and impact of the fall:

Only take this step when you've exhausted both elimination and isolation as controls.

- > Use a fall arrest or work positioning system ie personal fall minimisation method.
- > Use safety nets or soft landing systems to minimise a fall to any worker at height. This is a fall minimisation method for a group of workers.

4. MONITOR YOUR APPROACH TO WORKING AT HEIGHT SAFELY

Constantly assess your approach to ensure it is fit for purpose. This includes:

- > regular inspections of the hazard control measures
- > discussing the control measures at tool box talks and site meetings
- > discussing the control measures with clients, contractors, sub-contractors and workers
- > actively supervising the work.

5. DOCUMENT YOUR APPROACH TO WORKING AT HEIGHT SAFELY

Keep a good record of your planning process and communicate your safe approach to clients, contractors, sub-contractors, workers, and other site visitors.

PUBLISHED: SEPTEMBER 2015. CURRENT UNTIL REVIEW IN 2017

This fact sheet is part of the *Working Safely at Height Toolkit* that supports the Best Practice Guidelines for Working at Height in New Zealand.

- > **Fact Sheet 1: Planning a safe approach to working at height**
- > Fact Sheet 2: Selecting the right equipment for working safely at height
- > Fact Sheet 3: Short duration work at height

- > Fact Sheet 4: Edge protection
- > Fact Sheet 5: Temporary work platforms
- > Fact Sheet 6: Total restraint system

For additional guidance on safe working at height see:

- > Be Safe Working on Roofs
- > Safe Working with Ladders and Stepladders
- > Health and Safety In Contracting Situations