



FACTSHEET 5.3 – Hazardous Work – Falls

Falls

WHS Regulations Part 4.4

A fall hazard includes situations where a worker or other person (e.g. visitor) is:

- in or on an elevated workplace, including plant (e.g. cranes) or a structure (e.g. a building roof, elevated walkway) that is at an elevated level;
- anything used to gain access to these elevated levels of plant or structures e.g. stairs or ladders ;
- near any opening or near the edge where a person could fall (e.g. a stairwell, an excavation, skylight); or
- on or near a surface through which a person could fall (e.g. brittle roof); or
- any other place from which a person could fall, such as a slippery, sloping or unstable surface (e.g. disturbed ground on a construction site).

The PCBU must also provide safe means of access to and exit from the workplace, or any area of the workplace referred to above.

The WHS Regulations establish the first priority as eliminating fall hazards. Carrying out the work on the ground, or work on a solid construction can eliminate working at height. This is usually best achieved at the design stage (advice is provided in the Code of Practice how this can be done).

If it is not possible to eliminate the risk, then risks are to be minimised through use of safe systems of work, including by providing (in descending order) :

- A fall prevention device - any equipment designed to prevent a fall and which, after installation, does not require ongoing adjustment, alteration or operation by the worker e.g. secure fence, scaffolding; elevated work platforms; mask climbing work platforms.
- A work positioning system - involves the use of any plant or structure (not a temporary work platform) that allows positioning of a person or thing and is safely supported where and while the work is being done e.g. industrial rope access systems, travel restraint systems.
- A fall arrest system - designed to prevent or reduce the severity of an injury to a person if a fall does occur e.g. industrial safety nets and safety harnesses and catch platforms.

Additional controls may also need to be implemented, such as training and competency assessment of workers, safe work procedures and work permit systems.

Safe use of ladders:

- Extension or single ladders should only be used as a means of access to and from a work area, not as a working platform.
- Ladders should have a load rating of at least 120 kg and be manufactured for industrial use.
- Single and extension ladders can be prevented from slipping by:
 - placing ladders at a slope of 4:1, and setting up stepladders in the fully opened position; and
 - securing ladders at both the top and bottom.