

TOOL BOX TALK

No. 29

Safe working at height

Prepare	Location? Distractions? Talk aids?
Reason	Over 40% of major injuries on construction sites involve falls from heights.
Why	More than 50% of falls from height end in death. Don't end up as a statistic.
Outline	This talk will cover what happens before working on roofs, hazards and safe working at height.

Before working at height

1. Before any work or access onto a roof, fragile materials should be identified and precautions decided.
2. Roof-edge barriers (or scaffolds) must be erected to prevent people and materials falling.
3. Access ladders must extend at least 1 metre above the stepping-off point and must be secured.
4. Where access ladders rise above 9 metres, a safe intermediate platform must be provided.
5. Ladders must be rested at the correct angle (1 unit out for 4 units up).

Q: *What should be identified before work at height starts?*

Hazards of working at height

1. If a fall could result in serious injury, guard-rails and toe-boards must be erected.
2. Hazards resulting from adverse weather conditions must be anticipated, and suitable precautions taken.
3. Too much material on a working platform decreases the access and egress.
4. Don't allow rubbish to accumulate as this is liable to cause accidents. Use a chute or lower materials properly.
5. Wet, windy or icy weather can seriously affect safety.

Q: *Above what height must edge protection, toe-boards and guard-rails be erected?*

Safe working on roofs

1. Only competent operatives may be used for roofing works.
2. Crawling boards or ladders must be provided and used where the roof is liable to collapse under a person's weight or the roof is sloping with a pitch over 10 degrees.
3. Where work is of short duration and the provision of guard-rails and toe-boards is impracticable, safety harnesses must be used with suitable anchorage points provided.
4. If using bitumen boilers, they require a drip tray.
5. Openings must be covered or guarded; if removed for the passage of workers or materials, replace immediately.

Q: *When must crawling boards or ladders be used?*

- **Note to supervisor:** Now inform your workforce of the company policy regarding working at height.

Do you have any questions for me?

Questions for you

Q: *How far should ladders extend above a stepping-off point?*

Q: *If work is of short duration, what safety precautions should be taken?*

REMEMBER THERE IS NO SAFE HEIGHT TO FALL FROM.

Further information

- GE 700 Construction Site Safety – Module C6
- VID 071 A Head for Heights (video)
- HSE – HSG33 Health and safety in roof work
- HSE – HSG150 Health and safety in construction