

## Safety Checklist

# Working at Heights in Construction

This checklist can be used by persons conducting a business or undertaking, principle contractors, and site supervisors to conduct basic inspections to look for common working at heights hazards.

Falls from heights is the number one cause of traumatic fatalities on NSW construction sites.

Working at heights could mean working as high up as a multi-storey building, or as low down as the second rung from the bottom of a ladder.

In fact, most fatal and serious falls occur from a height of four metres or less. Employers must manage the risk of a fall by a person from one level to another, regardless of the height. However, if there is a risk of a person falling more than two metres you also need a [safe work method statement](#) to plan how to keep your workers safe.

Following the hierarchy of control, you can plan for worker height safety by having the right equipment for the right kind of task, at the right time.

### **1. Work on the ground or on a solid construction**

If you don't have to work at heights, don't. Working from the ground is always the safest option.

### **2. Use a fall-prevention device**

If you have to work from a height, a fall-prevention device is best because it will prevent your workers from falling. Examples include guard rails, scaffold, temporary work platforms including elevating work platforms, void covers, barriers or crawl boards (for brittle roofs).

### **3. Use a work-positioning system**

If it's not possible to use a fall-prevention device, a work-positioning system is your next best option. A work-positioning system either prevents a fall hazard being reached, e.g. restraint system, or enables a person to work supported in tension in a way that prevents the person from falling, e.g. industrial rope access. A work-positioning system requires correct design and reliance on user behaviour to ensure its effectiveness.

### **4. Use a fall-arrest system**

A fall-arrest system can only be used when it is not possible to use either a fall-prevention device or a work-positioning system. A fall-arrest system may not prevent a fall, however if installed and used properly, it reduces the impact of the fall. Examples include industrial safety nets, catch platforms or harness-based fall-arrest systems used with lifelines or individual anchors. These systems rely heavily on worker behaviour, and the condition and suitability of the equipment. Note: If you use a fall arrest system, you must have emergency and rescue procedures in place and test them to ensure they are effective.

A combination of the above controls may be used if a single control is not sufficient.

SafeWork NSW inspectors take a zero-tolerance approach to workers' lives being placed at risk by not using the appropriate safety equipment when working at heights. Employers face on-the-spot fines of up to \$3,600 for each risk, as well as prosecution.

Name	Date	Time
Site address		
Principal Contractor		

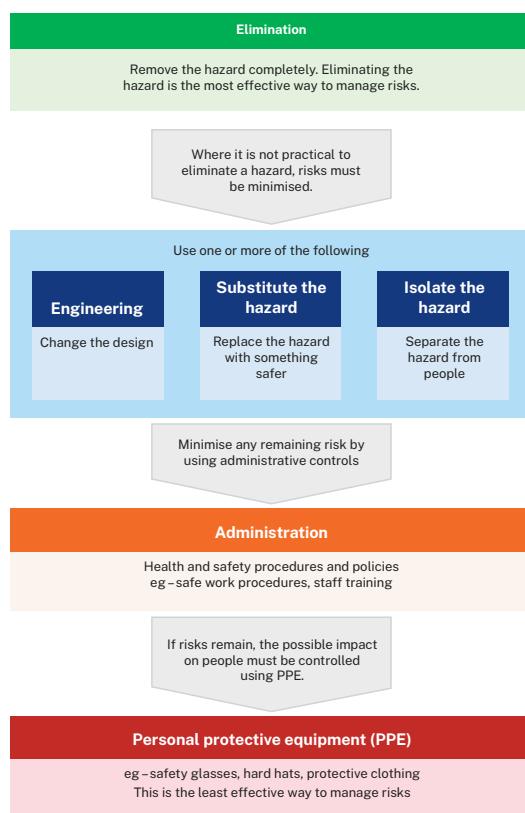
<b>Planning for safety</b>				
<b>Falls from heights are preventable, with the right planning, and the right safety equipment in place at the right time</b>		<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N/A</b>
The work tasks, locations, associated fall hazards and suitable control measures have been identified before starting work, including safe access for workers, equipment, and materials				
A site specific <a href="#">safe work method statement</a> (SWMS) has been prepared and made available for supervisors and workers (e.g. for work at heights above 2m)				
The appropriate heights safety equipment is ordered/available and will be in place at the appropriate stage of work				
Comments				
<b>Consultation and communication</b>				
<b>Talk with your workers, to make sure they understand and contribute to site safety</b>		<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Workers have been consulted on work at heights risks (e.g. through toolbox talks, SWMS, site induction, other meetings)				
Workers know the work at heights risks and are following the safety rules and/or SWMS				
Workers have been told that they must not remove components from a scaffold (even for access) if they do not hold a scaffolding high risk work licence				
Comments				
<b>Ladders</b>				
<b>Check out if there is a safer alternative to using a ladder e.g. work platform</b>		<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N/A</b>
If using ladders, they are only used for appropriate activities (e.g. short term work, access and egress)				
The ladders are in good condition and rated for industrial use (120kg)				
When using A-frames style ladders, workers ensure the ladders are stable when set up (e.g. all 4 feet of ladder in contact with the ground, locking mechanism in place)				
When using A-frame style ladders, they are tall enough, so workers don't have to stand on the top 2-3 steps				
When using an extension ladder, is it set up correctly (e.g. 1:4/grounded/secured at top and bottom/extends 1 metre from landing space)				
Comments				

<b>Roofs</b>	<b>You must use fall prevention devices such as roof guard rails or scaffold where possible</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Following hierarchy of control principles, when working on a roof the fall protection planned to prevent workers from falling off the side of the roof, or through brittle roof materials (e.g. skylights/clear plastic sheeting) includes:				
Off the side of the roof risk controls	Through brittle roof materials risk controls			
If using roof guard rails or scaffold, they are installed correctly and are safe, with no missing components				
If a fall restraint system is being used, the system prevents workers from reaching a position where they can fall (e.g. off the edge or through skylights)				
If harnesses are being used, they have an adequate anchor plan, adequate number and capacity of anchors in place, an emergency and rescue procedure, and workers are trained and always attached				
The harness, lanyard and rope access system are suitably rated, tagged and has been inspected for defects by a competent person				
Comments				
<b>Scaffold</b>				
<b>Most falls occur from scaffold because there were missing components</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N/A</b>	
The scaffolders high risk work licence has been checked (for scaffolds where workers or materials could fall 4 metres or more)				
The scaffold has been inspected by a competent person and has provided written confirmation (e.g. handover certificate) before first use, at least every 30 days, after modifications and after extreme weather events				
There are no missing planks, kick boards, mid or top rails				
There are adequate ties and bracing				
There is safe access/egress to scaffold decks				
Gaps between working decks and building edges no greater than 225mm (horizontal) and no greater than 300mm (vertical)				
The scaffold is appropriately supported on the ground				
The scaffold duty rating is provided and is not overloaded				
Comments				

<b>Voids and edges (including excavations)</b>			
<b>Voids and building (or other) edges must be always protected</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N/A</b>
All voids are covered, secured and marked or physical barriers in place			
All edges (balconies, slabs, floors) are adequately protected to prevent falls (e.g. with scaffold, guarding, handrails etc)			
There is safe access/egress between floors/levels			
Excavations and pits are adequately protected to prevent falls (e.g. with fencing, covers, barriers)			
Comments			

## Hierarchy of control

The ways of controlling risks are ranked from the highest level of protection and reliability to the lowest as shown in the hierarchy of control image.



## More information

### General guidance

[The pocket guide to construction safety](#)  
[Safe Work Method Statement template](#)  
[Fact sheet: Temporary edge protection \(roof rails\)](#)

[Toolbox talk: Using ladders in construction](#)

[Toolbox talk: Using scaffold in construction](#)

[Checklist: Scaffold safety](#)

[Checklist: Formwork safety](#)

[Video: Safe use of ladders](#)

[Video: How to prevent falls on a construction site using temporary stairs](#)

[Video: How to prevent falls on a construction site using void covers](#)

[Poster: Using ladders](#)

[Podcast: SafetyCast](#)

### Codes of practice and standards

[Managing the risk of falls at workplaces](#)

[Managing the risk of falls in housing construction](#)

[Construction Work](#)

[Work near overhead powerlines](#)

[Scaffolding industry safety standard](#)

[Guide to safe solar panel installation](#)

For further information on working at heights safely in construction, see [safework.nsw.gov.au](http://safework.nsw.gov.au) or call 13 10 50.

## Disclaimer

This publication may contain information about the regulation and enforcement of work health and safety in NSW. It may include some of your obligations under some of the legislation that SafeWork NSW administers. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation. Information on the latest laws can be checked by visiting the NSW legislation website [www.legislation.nsw.gov.au](http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au)

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Catalogue No. SWNSW\_35130\_23  
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