

Working at Height Policy

Section 1 - Overview

(1) Falling from height often results in injury which permanently incapacitates a person. Being hit by falling objects or falling through, or from, roofs or unsuitable work platforms can result in fatalities. The risk of a fall includes

- a. in or on an elevated workplace from which a person may fall;
- b. in the vicinity of an opening through which a person could fall,
- c. or in the vicinity of an edge over which a person could fall,
- d. on a surface through which a person can fall or
- e. in any other place from which a person can fall.

(2) The University of New England has a legal obligation under WHS Act 2011 to ensure the health and safety of its workers, students and others at the workplace. The Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 and various Codes of Practice specifically address the need for management systems to address the risks associated with work at a height.

(3) The University is aware that some staff and other parties, need to work at heights in the course of undertaking their normal work duties. Trades work is increasingly being outsourced but some staff may still be exposed to certain work at height related risks.

Principles

(4) So far as is reasonably practicable the University will ensure that any work that involves the risk of a fall is carried out on the ground or on a solid construction.

(5) Working on roofs has been identified as a high risk activity for both staff and contractors. All persons working on roofs will be provided with fall prevention or fall arrest systems and will receive training in legislation, regulations, standards and codes of practice, selection and use of protective equipment and anchor points, ground clearance and pendulum effect, forces generated by falls, the correct fitting of body harnesses and knowledge of how to operate a rapid response kit.

(6) It is the ultimate goal of the University to provide anchor points and/or permanent walkways on all roofs or roof spaces which need to be accessed. This is a long term goal and may take some time to achieve. In the meantime, the University intends to effectively manage those risks associated with working at height and minimise the potential for harm to occur.

Section 2 - Policy

(7) Where possible, the University will use design and relocation controls to reduce the need for work at height.

(8) A documented risk management approach will be used to ensure safety while working at heights of over 1.5 metres.

(9) All harnesses, fall arresting/travel restricting systems, ladders, safety footwear and associated equipment must

comply with the current Australian Standards.

(10) To avoid the risk of electrocution, work near overhead powerlines, can only be carried out where staff have been trained; have been provided with training and suitable equipment; safe work procedures are documented; suitable ladders and adequate protection are provided.

Work platforms

(11) A stable work platform must be provided for any work at height.

(12) Guardrails on work platforms, including scaffolding, should be between 900-1100mm above the working surface and have a top rail, mid-rail and a toe-board or include an infill panel which incorporates a kick-plate.

(13) Platforms used in conjunction with a trestle ladder must have a minimum width of 450mm and must be supported across their entire width.

(14) Provision must be made for a safe means of movement between different levels when working at height.

Ladders

(15) All ladders must be;

- a. used only for the purposes for which they have been designed
- b. manufactured for industrial use
- c. have a load rating of at least 120 kg
- d. erected on a stable surface
- e. placed at an angle of approximately 70 degrees when in use
- f. prevented from moving while in use

(16) Stiles of ladders must extend at least one metre above the stepping off point

(17) Metal ladders or wire bound ladders must not be used near powerlines

(18) Conditions of stepladder use require that ;

- a. workers must not stand on the top two steps of a stepladder unless an appropriately guarded working platform is incorporated in to the ladder design;
- b. work requiring the simultaneous release of both hands may only be carried out if the height is below 1.5 metres and does not require over reaching or cause fatigue;
- c. both hands must be used to grip the step ladder when ascending and descending;
- d. all tools must be used and supported in a manner that does not affect the centre of gravity of the user; and
- e. leaning towards the ladder is permitted as it does not adversely affect the centre of gravity.

Research and other academic activities

(19) Risk assessments must be conducted to identify whether machines and other equipment have the potential to create falling objects or fall from height risks.

(20) Fall prevention measures must be in place for on campus and identified fieldwork risks

Theatre and sporting activities

The legislation (CI 79 WHS Regulation 2011) provides some exemptions for specific requirements to minimise the risk

of fall. These exemptions apply to the following work the performance of stunt work, the performance of acrobatics, a theatrical performance, a sporting or athletic activity and horse riding. It may be expected, however, that stage crew working at height will be able to provide evidence of working at height training.

(21) Staff involved with work at height in drama and theatre activities must comply with Australian Entertainment Industry Guidelines

(22) Staff supervising sporting or leisure activities involving the potential for falls from height must ensure compliance with the Health & Safety for Artificial Climbing Structures and Operations Code of Practice 2002 [and the Australian Adventure Activity Standards](#).

Cleaning

(23) Safe work procedures must be followed when carrying out housekeeping tasks which have the potential for falling objects or falls from height, e.g. cob webbing, cleaning windows, blinds, gutter cleaning.

(24) A suitable work-platform must be used when carrying out minor tasks, e.g. painting, trimming ivy.

(25) Light bulbs situated at a height of over two metres must be replaced by competent persons.

Roof spaces

(26) A permit must be issued prior to entry to roof spaces which do not comply with access requirements of AS 1657 or UNE design standards.

(27) Roof spaces which have the potential of atmospheric contamination and are not naturally ventilated must be considered as confined spaces.

Roofs

(28) A permit is required from Facilities Management Services in order to gain access or undertake work on the roof of any University building.

(29) The general information data provided in the University or workplace roof register must be considered when assessing the level of risk posed by any roof related activity and deciding on suitable controls.

(30) No routine roof maintenance work will be carried out during adverse weather conditions (e.g. high winds, wet, frost covered).

(31) Fall prevention or fall arrest controls must be used when working within two metres of a roof edge which has no perimeter protection.

(32) All footwear used while working on roofs must have a non-slip tread pattern.

Training

(33) A certificate of competency is required for the design or erection of scaffolding over 4 metres in height.

(34) Doggers, riggers, crane operators, hoist operators and operators of other plant used for working at height must have relevant certification.

(35) All staff using fall arrest devices must be trained in the assembly and use of the system.

(36) All staff working on roofs, which do not have permanent walkways or full perimeter fencing, must have received training in the use of harnesses, ropes and accessories

Section 3 - Procedures

- (37) All workers planning to work at height must document their risk assessment and safe work method. Generic risk assessments may be used.
- (38) Supervisors must review risk assessments and any measures adopted to control the risk whenever there is a significant change proposed at the place of work or work at height practices or procedures.
- (39) Risk assessments may be amended, if on-site conditions change or if an alternative method is required.
- (40) Supervisors must ensure that persons whose judgement may be, or appears to be impaired by alcohol and drugs are not permitted to work at height.
- (41) All harnesses must be inspected prior to use and results logged in a maintenance record sheet.
- (42) At least two persons must be present at all times, if a fall arrest system is used.
- (43) Unless the worker is wearing a pole strap or fall arrest system not attached to the ladder, the "three point of contact" applies when working on a ladder,

Special conditions for Contractors

- (44) All tender documents will require that contractors supply risk assessment and safe work method statements for proposed work at height.

Section 4 - Definitions

- (45) The following definitions are only intended to apply to this policy.
- (46) Anchorage points — are secure points for lifelines and lanyards
- (47) Competent person — is a person who has acquired through training, qualification, experience or a combination of these, the knowledge and skill to perform the task correctly.
- (48) Fall arrest system — is any device to minimise the length and severity of a fall.
- (49) Fall prevention device—includes a secure fence, edge protection, working platforms and covers
- (50) Solid construction means an area has
- a. a surface that is structurally capable of supporting all persons and all things that may be located or placed on it and
 - b. barriers around its perimeter and any openings to prevent a fall, and
 - c. an even and readily negotiated surface and gradient and
 - d. a safe means of entry and exit
- (51) Three points of contact — At least 3 limbs holding, wrapped around or standing on the ladder in any combinations, e.g. 2 hands and one foot or two feet and one hand on the ladder.

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