# Working at heights inspection tool

The majority of fall from heights accidents can be avoided with proper planning. This workplace ‘inspection tool’ is not compulsory but will help you to identify and review work at heights activities at your site. You can then develop and/or streamline safe workplace practices, prevent incidents as well as help you to comply with regulatory requirements.

The initial process will take some time to organise and document, but means you can be confident that unnecessary heights activities are eliminated or contracted out. The process to assist you with a heights review is:

1. Review your workplace activities
2. Collate your information
3. Prioritise and plan how you will address any work at heights issues
4. Establish safe work practices
5. Risk assess your activities

When completed, this tool will help your workplace to develop a summary of all ‘work at heights’ or ‘falling objects’ activities and hazards in your workplace. It will also collate information that will help you to manage the risks associated with these activities or hazards.

Using the action plan to guide you, establish safe work practices for any identified tasks or hazard areas.

* Complete risk assessments/SWMS/SOPs for these tasks.
* Implement any identified control measures (use the five level hierarchy to guide you).
* Ensure staff are adequately informed and trained before work commences.
* Maintain records.

**Principal/Site Manager/Workplace Health and Safety Committee**

**DoE employees**

**Note: school employees and all volunteers are prohibited from being on, or working on roofs.**

Collate your findings. Summarise any required actions in the Workplace   
falls from heights action plan.

Contractors

Review your workplace procedure for contracted work at heights

Consult with workers to obtain information. Use the *Fall hazards* and *workplace practices checklists* to help this consultation. Review the [DoE Working at heights guideline](https://mpe.education.qld.gov.au/initiativesstrategies/Documents/working-at-heights-guideline.pdf) to assist with hazard identification, risk assessment and control processes.

Nominate staff member(s) to co-ordinate the workplace heights review.

Consult people with knowledge and experience who undertake heights work and are familiar with workplace hazards. Consider:

* workplace tasks/areas that have fall from heights hazards
* who is at risk and what are the consequences of a fall
* the potential severity of any injuries
* the frequency and duration of activities
* risks due to the natural environment or the design of the workplace
* are workers trained and competent and are there any training requirements
* are there additional risks posed by the installation and removal of work equipment
* are there other risks (electrical; mechanical; or manual handling risks), and
* are there risks arising from current organisational or procedural practices?

To further minimise risks, consider gaining assistance to:

* identify/designate/mark safe roof access and egress points
* identify/sign/isolate brittle roof areas, and
* identify, mark and place any equipment (e.g. ladders, anchor points/ plates) on a maintenance schedule to ensure compliance with inspection and repair requirements.

## Workplace fall hazards and practices checklists and action plan

Inspections are a good way to identify hazards and issues specific to your work environment and activities. You (and your team) can either develop your own inspection checklists covering all work areas and tasks carried out in your workplace, or you can modify and use the hazard checklists and tools provided.

The following checklists can be used to help you to review existing fall from heights activity in the workplace.

1. Identify the tasks that you might do across the top of the *Workplace fall hazards checklist* (you can add or delete activities) then walk around the workplace and talk to your colleagues to identify fall hazards. Record the results on the checklist.
2. Once you have identified the tasks you undertake in your workplace and the hazards associated with them, it is useful to consider how they are managed. Use the *Workplace practices checklist* to identify what practices you have in place or need to develop to manage fall hazards in your workplace.
3. Summarise your workplace review into the *Workplace falls from heights action plan.*
4. Work through your action plan to ensure you have good work practices at your workplace to manage fall hazards.

## Workplace fall hazards checklist

Modify this checklist to suit your workplace tasks (the tasks listed here are examples only). Place an 🗵 to indicate hazards that need to be managed and a ☑ to indicate hazards are adequately identified and controlled.

| **Common hazards to check at the worksite:** | | Clean roof gutters | Retrieve items from a roof (e.g. balls). | Perform maintenance work at ceiling height indoors (e.g. change light fittings, projector bulbs) | Use a ladder, stepladder or work platform | Set up hanging classroom displays. | Access lighting and other fittings and equipment in multipurpose areas | Change outdoor display signs | Undertake building maintenance | Grounds and garden maintenance | Access loading docks with no edge protection. | Use a scissor lift, cherry picker or other lifting equipment. |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Surfaces (the evenness and stability of ground for safe support of scaffolding or working platform): | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ◼ | the stability |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ◼ | the fragility or brittleness |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ◼ | the potential to slip (e.g. where surfaces are wet, polished, glazed or oily) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ◼ | the safe movement of employees where surfaces change |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ◼ | the strength or capability to support loads |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ◼ | the slope of work surfaces |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Levels (where levels change and employees may be exposed to a fall from one level to another) | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Structures (the stability of temporary or permanent structures) | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The working area (whether it is crowded or cluttered) | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Scaffolding (the correct erection and dismantling) | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Edges (edge protection for open edges of ﬂoors, working platforms, walkways, walls or roofs) | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Hand grips (places where hand grip may be lost e.g. rain can make surfaces slippery and strong winds can cause loss of hand grip) | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Openings or holes which will require identiﬁcation or protection; or unguarded shafts or excavations | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Proximity of employees to unsafe areas (barriers are used) | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Loads that are placed on elevated working areas (check stability of structures or load bearing capacity). | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Work areas are clear of protruding objects, water, vehicles and people (e.g. star pickets, tree stumps, fences, students). | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Locations where work is to be carried out above workers (e.g. potential hazards from falling objects). | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Power lines near working areas; solar arrays, cables between buildings. | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Movement of plant or equipment (ensuring there is no sudden acceleration or deceleration). | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The method of getting plant, equipment and materials to and from the work area is safe (checking for obstructions; clear travel paths). | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Manual handling (checking safe work practices for carrying awkward materials, such as plaster boards and roof sheeting, which may be caught by the wind). | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Adequate lighting; reflective glare; UV exposure of workers. | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Weather conditions (when heavy rain, dew or wind are present) | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Footwear and clothing (suitability for conditions) | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ladders (where and how they are being used, are they used only for access and egress or as work platforms?) | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ladder anchor plates are identified, regularly inspected and maintained. | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ladder extends one metre above roof level on access and egress points. | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Other: | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## Workplace practices checklist

Now that you have identified the tasks you undertake in your workplace and the hazards associated with them, it is useful to consider how they are managed as poor workplace practices can often be a major contributor to fall incidents. Consult with staff. Use this information to develop relevant practices and communicate these clearly (e.g. through training and induction). Modify this checklist to suit your workplace tasks (the tasks listed here are examples only). Place an 🗵 to indicate hazards that need to be managed and a ☑ to indicate good practices are in place.

| **Workplace practices** | | | Clean roof gutters | Retrieve items from a roof (e.g. balls). | Perform maintenance work at ceiling height indoors (e.g. change light fittings, projector bulbs) | Use a ladder, stepladder or work platform | Set up hanging classroom displays. | Access lighting and other fittings and equipment in multipurpose areas | Change outdoor display signs | Undertake building maintenance | Grounds and garden maintenance | Access loading docks with no edge protection. | Use a scissor lift, cherry picker or other lifting equipment. |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Work on roofs is prohibited for DoE employees (excludes TAFEs) and all volunteers. | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The risks of anyone falling, or objects falling from heights have been assessed: | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ◼ | Practical steps have been taken to prevent falls (i.e. control measures are used). | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ◼ | Safer, alternative ways to do the work have been considered. | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ◼ | Potential hazards have been identified and actioned. | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Persons working at heights are medical fit and physically able. | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Staff nominated to work at heights has been given information, instruction and training before they are authorised to commence work. This includes an understanding of risk management documentation. | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Staff are supervised where required to ensure that safe work practices are adhered to. (Control measures are used and effective). | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Unauthorised height access is blocked. Access to any equipment used to work higher than two metres is restricted. | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Heights equipment is designated as authorised use only. | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Inspections of plant and machinery occur prior to work commencing. | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Maintenance and repair programs are recorded, reported and reviewed regularly to ensure their effectiveness. They may incorporate: when servicing is required; the extent of servicing required; the nature of the servicing required; the frequency of servicing; who is responsible for maintaining repair and maintenance programs; and how defects will be corrected. | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Plant is operated by trained and competent operators who hold current relevant certiﬁcates or training competencies. This training is recorded in the workplace. | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Contractor work practices** | | WAAPs/permit to work; contractor supplied SWMS and risk assessments, equipment maintained/inspection records, rescue plans etc.) are recorded (e.g. documentation uploaded to BEMIR). |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Authority to access heights is documented and includes evidence of local induction, training, instruction and/or competency. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Processes are in place to ensure contractors undertake compliant work |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Roof anchor points for work positioning systems are inspected and logged as required by AS1891.4 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Safety signage is displayed when required (e.g. lift wells/trenches have barriers and/or signage in place during maintenance). |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Other: | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## Workplace work at heights action plan

Use the information you collected from your workplace review to develop an action plan to prioritise and address any work at heights issues you have identified. You can also use this information to help you complete risk management documentation for specific work at heights tasks.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Priority** | | | **Required action** | **Due date** | **Responsible person** | **Completion date** |
| **H** | **M** | **L** |
| Clean roof gutters |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Retrieve items from a roof (e.g. balls). |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Perform maintenance work at ceiling height indoors (e.g. change light fittings, projector bulbs) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Use a ladder, stepladder or work platform |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Set up hanging classroom displays. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Access lighting and other fittings and equipment in multipurpose areas |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Change outdoor display signs |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Undertake building maintenance Grounds and garden maintenance |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Access loading docks with no edge protection. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Use a scissor lift, cherry picker or other lifting equipment. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Contractor work |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## Remember to:

Provide any relevant documentation and training to workers when undertaking fall from heights tasks (e.g. [safe use of ladders SOP](https://mpe.education.qld.gov.au/initiativesstrategies/Documents/ladder-operating-procedure.pdf), mobile scaffold SWMS).

Review workplace effectiveness of prevention of falls planning at least annually (e.g. incorporate into annual WHS audit or [Annual school assessment](https://mpe.education.qld.gov.au/initiatives-and-strategies/health-and-wellbeing/workplaces/safety/managing/annual-assessment)). Review more frequently if something changes, new equipment is used or an incident occurs. Ratify all documentation through approved delegated workplace authority (e.g. WHS Committee).