



WORKING AT HEIGHT

Introduction

Working at height refers to any work that is above ground or below ground in which a person could fall and injure themselves if no precautions are taken. Working at height remains one of the biggest causes of fatalities and major injuries. Common cases include falls from ladders and through fragile surfaces. ‘Work at height’ means work in any place where, if there were no precautions in place, a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal injury.

Regulatory Requirement

According to Malaysia *Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act 1994* on *Regulation 12* of Safety, Health and Welfare Regulations 1970, working at height defines ‘when any person is required to work at a place from which he will be liable to fall a distance of **more than 10 feet**, means shall be provided to ensure his safety and such means shall where practicable include the use of safety belts or ropes.’

Workers in maintenance and construction are particularly at risk, but many other people in a variety of jobs could also be at risk of falling from height. Such professions include painters, decorators and window cleaners and those who carry out ad hoc work without proper training, planning or equipment.

Other significant hazards associated with working at height include falling objects and the potential for a working platform to collapse or overturn as well as contact with overhead electrical services.



In short, it means working in any place where, if there were no precautions in place, a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal injury. Many of major injuries occur during;

- Aircraft maintenance
- Getting in or out of aircraft
- Working on or from service equipment such as belt loaders, catering high loaders etc

Sensible approach should be taken when considering precautions for work at height. There may be some low-risk situations where common sense tells you no particular precautions are necessary and the law recognises this. So, before working at height you must work through these simple steps:

- Avoid work at height where it is reasonably practicable to do so
- Where work at height cannot be avoided, prevent falls using either an existing place of work that is already safe or the right type of equipment
- Minimise the distance and consequences of a fall, by using the right type of equipment where the risk cannot be eliminated

Dos and don'ts of working at height

Do....

- as much work as possible from the ground
- ensure workers can get safely to and from where they work at height
- ensure equipment is suitable, stable and strong enough for the job, maintained and checked regularly
- take precautions when working on or near fragile surfaces
- provide protection from falling objects
- consider emergency evacuation and rescue procedures

Don't...

- overload ladders – consider the equipment or materials workers are carrying before working at height. Check the pictogram or label on the ladder for information
- overreach on ladders or stepladders
- rest a ladder against weak upper surfaces, eg glazing or plastic gutters
- use ladders or stepladders for strenuous or heavy tasks, only use them for light work of short duration (a maximum of 30 minutes at a time)
- let anyone who is not competent (who doesn't have the skills, knowledge and experience to do the job) work at height



General Precautions To Reduce The Risk Of Fall

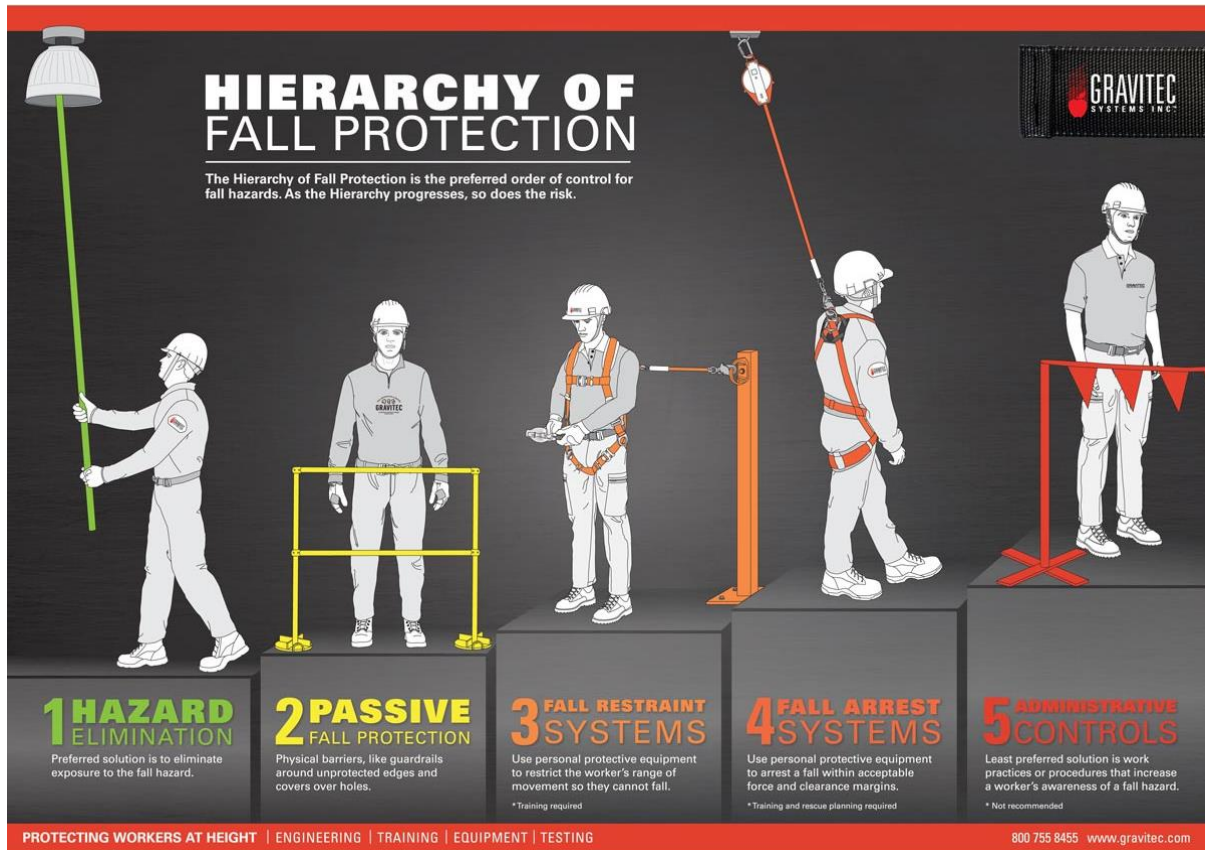
- Do as much work as possible from the ground
- Ensure workers can get safely to and from where they work at height
- Provide working platforms with suitable edge protection
- Ensure that any adjustable edge protection has been properly set
- Provide suitable edge protection or keep shut any openings in the aircraft fuselage
- Ensure equipment is suitable, stable and strong enough for the job, maintained and checked regularly
- Make sure you don't overload or overreach when working at height
- Take precautions when working on near or fragile surfaces
- Provide protection from falling objects
- Consider your emergency evacuation and rescue procedures

Control measures

First assess the risks. Factors to weigh up include the height of the task, the duration and frequency, and the condition of the surface being worked on. Before working at height work through these simple steps:

- Avoid work at height where it's reasonably practicable to do so
- Where work at height cannot be easily avoided, prevent falls using either an existing place of work that is already safe or the right type of equipment
- Minimise the distance and consequences of a fall, by using the right type of equipment where the risk cannot be eliminated
- Report any safety hazard

- Use the equipment and safety devices supplied properly, in accordance with any training and instructions
- Consult supervisor on risk arising from work, proposals to manage and control the risks and best ways of providing information and training



Things To Consider

The following are all requirements in law that you need to consider when planning and undertaking work at height;

- Weather conditions
- Ensure the place (e.g roof) is safe. Check everytime before use
- Stop materials from falling or suitable and sufficient measures to protect from injury, e.g, exclusion zones or mesh on scaffold to prevent materials from falling off
- Store materials safely so they won't cause injury if they are disturbed or collapse
- Plan for emergency and rescue, e.g evacuation procedure. Think about foreseeable situations and make sure everyone knows the emergency procedures.

The Right Equipment

When selecting equipment for work at height, ensure;

- The most suitable equipment appropriate for the work (refer figure 1)
- Take account of these factors;
 - The working conditions (e.g weather)
 - The nature, frequency and duration of work
 - The risks to the safety of everyone where the work equipment will be used

Equipment In Good Condition

Work equipment, for example scaffolding, needs to be assembled or installed according to the manufacturer's instructions and in keeping with industry guidelines.

Where the safety of the work equipment depends on how it has been installed or assembled, an employer should ensure it is not used until it has been inspected in that position by a competent person, someone who has the necessary skills, experience and knowledge to manage health and safety.

Any equipment exposed to conditions that may cause it to deteriorate and result in a dangerous situation, should be inspected at suitable intervals appropriate to the environment and use. Do an inspection every time something happens that may affect the safety or stability of the equipment, e.g adverse weather or accidental damage.

You are required to keep a record of any inspection for types of work equipment including: guard rails, toe-boards, barriers or similar collective means of protection; working platform (any platform used as a place of work or as a means of getting to and from work, e.g a gangway) that are fixed (e.g a scaffold around a building) or mobile (e.g a mobile elevated working platform MEWP or scaffold tower); or a ladder.

Any working platform used for construction work and from which a person could fall more than 2 metres must be inspected:

- After assembly in any position
- After any event liable to have affected its stability
- At intervals not exceeding seven days

Where it is a mobile platform, a new inspection and report is not required every time it is moved to a new location on the same site.

You must also ensure that before you use any equipment, such as MEWP, which has come from another business or rental company, it is accompanied by an indication (clear to everyone involved) when last thorough examination has been carried out.

