Toolbox Talk

Working at Height

Acorn Health & Safety Ltd

Purpose / objectives

This talk discusses what you need to think about and do, before and while carrying out work at height

Hazards / risks

Working at height is defined as 'any place where a fall from could result in injury'. This includes working beside open excavations

Around half of all deaths on construction sites are due to falls from height, therefore all work at height must be properly planned

Hazards

- Incorrect selection or use of access equipment for the particular task being undertaken is one of the biggest causes of falls from height. You should never use the wrong piece of equipment just because it is all you have available
- Adverse weather conditions (wet, windy or icy weather), should be anticipated and suitable precautions taken
- Excess material on a working platform - this can make the platform unstable and access difficult
- Do not allow waste to build-up. Use a chute or lower materials properly

Before undertaking work at height	All work at height must be avoided where possible. If work at height cannot be avoided, a collective system to prevent falling should be used e.g. MEWP, mobile tower scaffold or fixed scaffolding
	The most suitable and correct access equipment must be provided for the task
	Ensure that you have the right skills, knowledge, training and experience for the task
	Ensure you have received the correct information, instruction and training on the safe use of the specific access equipment you will use, so that the work at height can be carried out safely
	All working at height must be carried out as per any safe system of work provided
	All access equipment provided must be inspected at specified intervals and before use, and maintained as required

	Fall prevention (such as edge protection systems, barriers and perimeter scaffolds) should be installed to prevent the risk of materials or persons falling
	The consequences of a fall should be reduced by the use of safety netting of fall arrest harness systems
	Ladders and stepladders should only be used for light work of a short duration and where there is a low risk of falling
	Access ladders must extend to at least one metre above the stepping-off point, be secured, and rest and the correct angle (one unit out to four units up)

Safe work on roofs	A safe means of access to the roof must be provided (such as a temporary staircase or fixed ladder with a gate)
	Fragile surfaces must be identified with signs e.g. cement roof sheets and skylights. Measures should be taken to stop you falling through any fragile surface
	A safe system of work must be devised and used where the roof could be liable to collapse under a person's weight, e.g. a temporary platform
	If edge protection or a soft-landing system cannot be used, it may be necessary to use a harness and lanyard. In this case, a secure, designed anchor point and training will be necessary
	Openings must have a cover or guard; if removed for any reason, replace as soon as it is practicable
	Where bitumen boilers are in use, a drip tray and fire extinguisher are required

Questions?

- What is the definition of working at height?
- What should be identified before any work at height begins?
- Above what height must edge protection, toe-boards and guard rails be erected?
- When might a temporary platform be used?
- How far should ladders extend above a stepping-off point?

Inform your workers of the company policy on working at height