Scouts

Dringhouses
City of York

Working at Height Policy and Guidance

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Contents

Version Control

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Introduction

Many activities in Scouts, particularly those relating to maintenance on buildings such as Scout headquarters and campsites, involve some type of work at height. Other times when working at height may be required include accessing high cupboards, setting up activities, pioneering projects or even preparing for a fundraising fete.

Any work at height creates risks. Falls from height, even low-level falls, can have serious consequences. Due to these risks, and the potential for serious injury, the Group requires users of Working at Height equipment to be trained in its use. Only following training, can a user be authorised to use the specified equipment.

Once trained, the first consideration when planning such work is to decide whether the work *has* to be done at height, e.g. can a flagpole be lowered to free a trapped lanyard; can the notice board be re-painted after it has been taken down rather than doing it in situ?

If the work must be done at height, then consider how the risks of falling can be reduced. Hiring a scaffold platform, with a guardrail around it, to fix a guttering is a better option than trying to tackle the job from a ladder.

So, before undertaking work at height:

- Decide whether you have to
- Decide on the mast appropriate equipment to use (based on your risk assessment)
- Do not work alone (see the lone working policy)
- Do not climb without equipment (e.g. ladders, towers).

Use of Ladders and Scaffolding Towers

If you choose to use a scaffold tower, ensure that it is erected by a competent person, who has been properly trained to do so.

Prolonged use of ladders should be really seen as the last resort. This is because slipping or falling from ladders is the cause of most falls from height. If after all the consideration and planning, it is decided that a ladder is the most appropriate piece of work equipment then it is essential that you consider the following to reduce your risk:

- Ladders should only be used for light work for no more than 30 minutes in any one position.
- Ladders should not be used for work which requires effort or force such as use of electric drill, pulling cables / wires etc.
- Ladders must be in good condition with steps and feet in good order. Users must conduct a visual check before using the ladder - see section below.
- Ladders must be secured before being used. Preferably use a securing hook to secure before climbing. In absence of securing hook, ladders should be secured by lashing at top [or bottom] before being used.
- Position ladder 4:1 [75 degree] angle.
- Both feet of ladder must be in contact with the ground / surface which is not slippery.
- Rungs and footwear should be checked for grease and wetness before use.
- Do not over-reach. Always keep your knees within the uprights of the ladder. The user's body kept within the up rights [stiles].
- Users should not stand above the top three rungs of the ladder.

- Only one person to be on the ladder at any one time.
- Three-points of contact must be maintained at all times [e.g. two feet, one hand]
- Don't carry heavy or awkward shaped loads on a ladder.
- Never carry loads heavier than 25kg – anything over 10kg should be avoided if possible.
- A non-conductive ladder must be used when sources of live electricity are likely to be present.

When using stepladders most of the above applies but also remember:

- Ensure all locking devices are in working order.
- Do not work off the top three steps unless a safe handhold is available.
- Avoid side-on working
- Do not overreach – make sure that your belt buckle stays with the up-rights and that both feet are kept on the same rung or step throughout the task.

Top Tips:

- So, the secret of safe working at height is:
- Avoid working at height if possible
- Carefully plan the work
- Conduct a thorough risk assessment
- Select the most suitable work equipment
- Ensure adequate supervision of the work all the time
- Follow the guidelines above

Leaning ladders and stepladders checks

Ladder checks should include:

- **the stiles (sides)** – make sure they are not bent or damaged, as the ladder could buckle or collapse
- **the feet** – if they are missing, worn or damaged the ladder could slip. Also check the ladder feet when moving from soft/dirty ground (e.g. dug soil, loose sand/stone, a dirty workshop) to a smooth, solid surface (e.g. paving slabs), to make sure the actual feet and not the dirt (e.g. soil, chippings or embedded stones) are making contact with the ground
- **the rungs** – if they are bent, worn, missing or loose, the ladder could fail
- **any locking mechanism** – does the mechanism work properly? Are components or fixings bent, worn or damaged? If so, the ladder could collapse. Ensure any locking bars are fully engaged
- **the stepladder platform** – if it is split or buckled, the ladder could become unstable or collapse
- **the steps, or treads on stepladders** – if they are contaminated, they could be slippery; if the fixings are loose on the steps, they could collapse

If you spot any of the above defects, do not use the ladder, put a sign on it to warn other potential users and report it to the Health and Safety Officer and GSL.

Scaffold towers checks

- Only hire towers from reputable suppliers.

- Only accept a tower if supplied with comprehensive instructions on how to erect, take down, and inspect it.
- Follow those instructions fully.

Risk Assessment

When planning to work at height a risk assessment is required. **Things you must consider are:**

- If someone needs to climb onto a roof, will it support them? Not just the one individual you planned for the job - but others that may come and join them plus any materials etc that are taken onto the roof.
- Are there any skylights or other fragile material you could fall through?
- If materials need to be removed from height, can they be safely lowered to the ground rather than thrown in a haphazard manner.
- Does the work area need to be segregated by barriers so that passers-by are not at risk and vehicles cannot hit any of the work equipment?