



# Working at height



**Working at height** means **any work where a person could fall and injure themselves**, whether above ground level, near an edge, or through a fragile surface. This includes using ladders, scaffolding, MEWPs, or working on vehicles or structures.

## Why it matters

- Falls from height are one of the leading causes of fatal and serious injuries in the rail industry
- Network Rail operates in environments with elevated structures, embankments and overhead lines. Being safe when working at height is important
- The Work at Height Regulations 2005 require employers to prevent falls wherever possible and minimise risk where avoidance isn't practicable.

## Key principles

- Avoid working at height, where possible
- Use the right equipment and procedures when working at height is necessary
- Ensure all work is risk assessed, properly planned, supervised, and carried out by competent people
- Network Rail's Life Saving Rule on Working at Height is: "Always use a harness when working at height, unless other precautions are in place."



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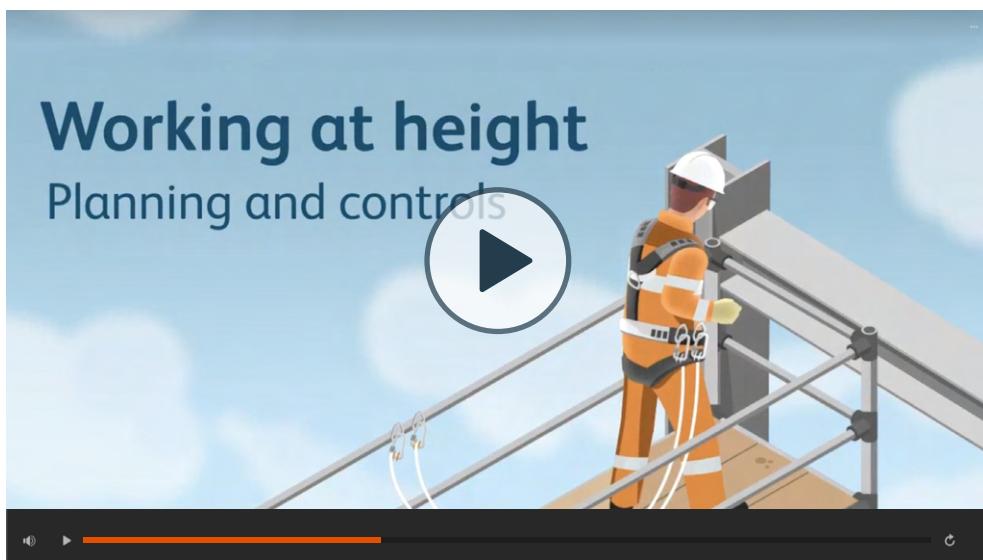
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# What to do



## Working at height – Planning and controls

Select the play button below to see the key points.



## Key points

### Hierarchy of control

1. Avoid working at height where possible. Can work be carried out from the ground?
2. Prevent falls using collective protection (e.g. guardrails, scaffolding)
3. Minimise consequences using PPE (e.g. harnesses, airbags).

### Planning safe work at height

- NR/L2/OHS/022 – Working Safely at Height Standard sets out the responsibilities for the persons who plan or control working at height in Network Rail
- Consider weather, lighting and ground conditions
- Ensure equipment is inspected and fit for purpose
- Identify fragile surfaces and mark them clearly
- Confirm emergency rescue plans before work begins.



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# What to do



## Common equipment

Type	Use case	Key considerations
Ladders	Short-duration, low-risk tasks	Must be secured and used at correct angle.
MEWPs	Access to elevated work areas	Operator must be trained and harnessed.
Scaffolding	Long-duration or complex tasks	Must be erected by competent personnel.
Fall arrest PPE	When other controls aren't possible	Requires anchor points and rescue plan.

### Do

- ✓ Check equipment before use
- ✓ Use fall protection where required
- ✓ Report damaged or missing safety equipment
- ✓ Follow the Safe System of Work and briefings.

### Don't

- ✗ Don't treat it as 'just a quick job' without planning
- ✗ Don't use ladders as work platforms
- ✗ Don't ignore weather or surface conditions
- ✗ Don't assume that PPE alone is enough.

## Managers

- Confirm workers are trained and competent
- Monitor compliance, and intervene when unsafe practices are observed
- Ensure risk assessments are completed and reviewed
- Provide appropriate equipment and PPE.



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# What to do



## TOP TIPS

- Always use three points of contact on ladders
- Never work at height alone without a rescue plan
- Don't use makeshift platforms or climb on plant or vehicles
- When accessing vehicles or plant equipment, only use propriety access steps.



## Questions to consider

1

Am I able to identify hazards (risks) when working at height?

3

Would I know what to do in an emergency situation, such as if a colleague fell or had a medical episode while working at height?

2

Do I understand the difference between fall prevention and fall arrest?

### Manager considerations

- Are all height-related activities, Planned, Risk assessed and documented?
- Does my team have a plan to regularly inspect and maintain WAH access equipment?
- Are rescue techniques understood by my teams, and practiced in accordance with standard requirements?



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# Resources



## Resources and support

[Network Rail Safety Central](#)

Work at Height Regulations 2005 – [HSE Guidance](#)

Network Rail Standard NR/L2/OHS/022 – Working Safely at Height

Network Rail Standard NR/L3/MTC/SE0220 – Planning and Delivering Safe Work at Height (maintenance only)

Task Risk Control Sheet – NR/L3/MTC/RCS0216/GH04 – Working at Height

Safety Events app – Confidential reporting for safety concerns

## Training courses

- Work at Height Foundation course
- Ladders and Stepladders course
- Work at Height eLearning
- Work at Height standard courses by discipline.



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