



accidents don't have to happen

Working at Height e-book

- Read the stories
- Know the facts
- Top tips



October 1-31, 2016

#OSHTober

Don't *fall* for it

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Introduction:

Don't fall for it!

Working at height is one of the biggest causes of fatalities and major injuries in the workplace, with common cases including falls from ladders or through fragile roofs.

Falls from height are a major workplace issue and this ebook aims to put you in the picture and help ensure that your business stays safe. As well as some top tips and advice on how to use ladders and work at heights, we'll also be sharing some incredible stories of workplace falls and giving you some shocking statistics.

Let's start by looking at a few key definitions concerning working at height...



This ebook is part of RoSPA's #OSHTober campaign. You can take part by [following us on Twitter](#) and using #OSHTober

2. The stories

Jason Anker



Jason is a motivational and behavioural safety speaker who gives industry talks about his experience of living as a paraplegic and the story of his life before, the day of and after the accident.

“In 1993 I was working for a construction company doing a bit of roofing work when I fell 10ft from a ladder. I realised straight away that I couldn't feel my legs and it was quickly determined that I had fractured my back and was paralysed from the waist down. I was told that I would never walk again. I was 24 years old.

I was inexperienced; I wasn't a roofer by trade, which were all the signs for something to potentially go wrong.

I was going up a ladder, it wasn't secured and the ground condition wasn't very good. I knew that I shouldn't be climbing it but I thought it would be OK.

My boss went up the ladder first and I remember thinking "this isn't right". It felt unsafe but I still climbed it.

I was trying to get the job done and I made a decision to do something unsafe and this is the consequence.”

“I would say to anyone who finds themselves in a similar situation to speak up if they think something is unsafe. The most important thing is to go home at the end of the day.”

You can read Jason's full story [here](#) or for more information or to book Jason for talks visit www.p2bs.org



2. The stories

Paul Blanchard



"I can't remember how or what happened but I fell through one of the openings. I assume it was because it was slippery. It was only 12ft, but I fell on a substantial cattle railing. I cracked my head and was knocked unconscious immediately. I was on my own, I had no scaffolding, and I had no duck boards.

I was in a coma for four months. I was never actually told I was paralysed. I think I had to ask the question a couple of times. My wife was told that I was not going to make it; she was told I probably would not be the same man I was before due to brain damage. Fortunately I recovered from that but I can't walk.

I miss everything that I used to be able to do, all the physical stuff. Even being able to walk the dogs or watching my wife take the bins out - I miss it dreadfully.

That two minute decision to do something I should not have done is something I have to pay for for the rest of my life.

I could have prevented that accident. I understand health and safety; I was an employer. I don't know why I didn't but I should have said "I'm not going to do the job until we have got x, y and z" and if they did not want me to do it in that manner then I should not have done the job."

In 2015, Paul Blanchard won a RoSPA Archangel Award, the highest honour in the [RoSPA Guardian Angel awards scheme](#) . In 2010, Paul fell through a roof whilst completing a barn conversion during wet conditions.

You can read Paul's full story [here](#) or you can visit his website [here](#)



3. Definitions

The 2005 Work at Height Regulations (hereafter WAHR) are based on a risk assessment approach to identifying what the hazard is and the degree of risk present. The regulations define 'at height' as ***a place at which a person could be injured falling from, even if it is at or below ground level.*** Whilst 'work' is defined as ***moving around at a place of work (except by a staircase in a permanent workplace) but not travel to or from a place of work.*** Based on these definitions, examples of working at height covered by the regulations include:

- Working on a flat roof
- Working from a ladder
- Erecting falsework and framework
- Working at ground level adjacent to an open excavation
- Working near or adjacent to fragile materials

However, the regulations do not include:

- Working up and down the staircase in an office
- Working in the upper floors of an office block or a Portakabin
- An operator sitting in a seat on an excavator
- Sitting in a chair

4. Schedules

Now you know what's covered by the regulations, it's vital to know when you need to apply them. The WAHR cover the detailed requirements for:

- Existing places of work and means of access for work at height
- Collective fall prevention (e.g. guard rails and toe boards)
- Working platforms
- Collective fall arrest (e.g. nets, airbags etc)
- Personal fall protection (e.g. work restraints, work positioning, fall arrest, and rope access)
- Ladders and step ladders
- Inspection reports (for working platforms in construction only)
- Revocation

The WAHR apply to all work at height where there is a risk of a fall liable to cause injury. They place duties on employers, employees, the self-employed and anyone who controls the work of others (e.g. facilities managers or building owners who may contract others to work at height) to the extent they control the work.

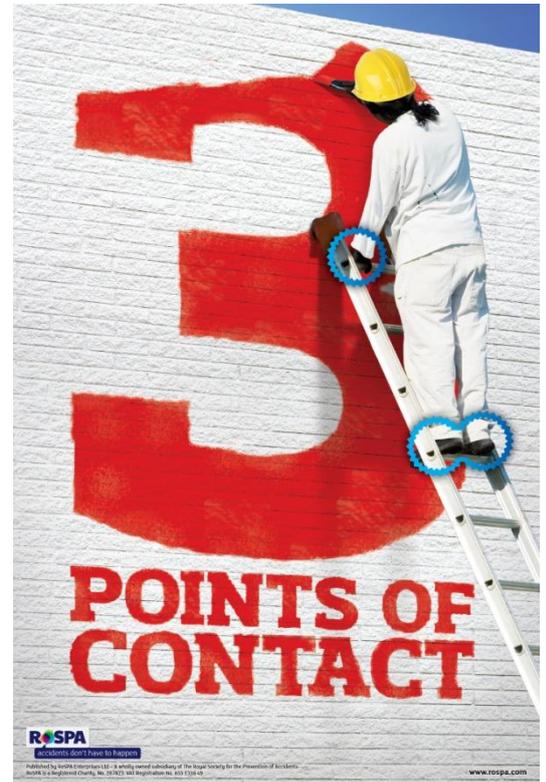
- Report any safety hazard to them
- Use the equipment supplied (including safety devices) properly, following any training and instructions (unless unsafe, to do so)

5. Leadership

The overriding principle is to do all that is reasonably practicable to prevent anyone falling

The above statement is fundamental for employers and essentially sets the goal for managing work at height. The regulations set out a simple hierarchy for managing and selecting equipment for work at height: As a duty holder you must:

- **AVOID** work at height where you can
- **PREVENT** any person falling by using an existing place of work or by using work equipment
- **MITIGATE** falls by using work equipment/methods to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall.
- **MITIGATE** falls by using work equipment to minimise the consequence of a fall.



5. Leadership

The risk of a fall occurring can also be reduced through instruction, training and supervision. In all cases collective measures have priority over personal protective measures. **Collective measures** are passive in that no action is required by the user to work effectively and more than one user is protected. Personal protection measures require the user to do something to make them work and are therefore active and only protect one user at a time.

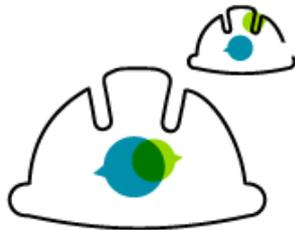
All work equipment/methods must be selected taking into account the risks associated with the installation, use, dismantling and rescue associated with it. For example, if the risk of installing /dismantling a fall protection measure is high e.g. two people providing a barrier at a roof edge to provide protection for one hour for one person, then a personal work restraint will be justified.



6. The statistics

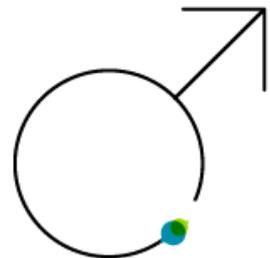
Now you know the basics, let's look at why working at height is so important. And what better way to do that than by giving you some fascinating statistics relating to falls:

50%
of all falls from height
involve
a construction worker



Source HSE: Slips and trips and falls from height in Great Britain, 2014.

All
fatal fall
injuries were to
male workers



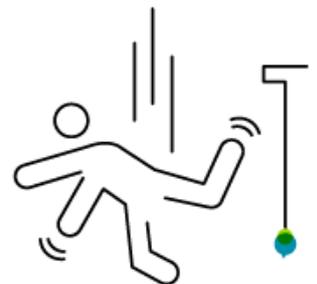
Source HSE: Slips and trips and falls from height in Great Britain, 2014.

Falls from height
accounted for an estimated
567,000
working days lost



Source HSE: Slips and trips and falls from height in Great Britain, 2014.

29%
Of all fatal
injuries to workers
are falls from height
(RIDDOR)



Source HSE: Slips and trips and falls from height in Great Britain, 2014.

39 deaths
to workers involved falls
from height



Source HSE: Slips and trips and falls from height in Great Britain, 2014.

7. Dos and Don'ts

The regulations also recommend that, where possible, working at height should be avoided. However, we respect this is not always practical. With this in mind, the Health and Safety Executive has provided the following advice for working at height:

Do...

- Make sure the surface/access equipment in use is stable and strong enough to support the worker's weight and that of any equipment. Any edge protection should be wide enough and strong enough to prevent a fall
- As much work as possible from the ground or partly from the ground, for example assemble structures on the ground and lift them into position with lifting equipment
- Take precautions when working on or near fragile surfaces, e.g. an asbestos cement roof, to prevent a fall or to minimise the distance and consequences in the event of a fall
- Ensure workers can get safely to and from where they want to work at height and also consider emergency evacuation and rescue procedures
- Make sure everyone involved is competent to do the work they are responsible for, including those who plan and organise it
- Choose the most appropriate equipment for the type of work being done and how often it will be used to provide protection from falling objects
- Make sure equipment used for work at height is well maintained and inspected regularly

7. Dos and Don'ts

The regulations also recommend that, where possible, working at height should be avoided. However, we respect this is not always practical. With this in mind, the Health and Safety Executive has provided the following advice for working at height:

Don't...

- Overload ladders – the person and anything they are taking up should not exceed the highest load stated on the ladder
- Overreach on ladders or stepladders – keep your belt buckle (navel) inside the stiles and both feet on the same rung throughout the task
- Use ladders or stepladders if the nature of the work is deemed to be 'heavy' or if the task will take longer than thirty minutes or so to complete
- Use ladders if workers cannot maintain three points of contact (hands and feet) at the working position. If this is not possible, consider an alternative safe system of work
- let anyone who is **not** competent (someone who doesn't have the skills, knowledge and experience to do the job) carry out work at height

8. Next steps

Undertaking safety training or attending a working at height course is an excellent way to help yourself and your colleagues stay safe. A good working at height training course will provide you with information including:

- An overview of working activities involving risk of injury from working at height and typical injuries
- Legal responsibilities including an overview of the Working at Height Regulations
- Basic hazards and factors affecting risk
- Main precautions to prevent falls and falling materials
- Safe working practices for common forms of access equipment
- Inspection requirements for scaffolds

As well as offering an in-company course that focuses specifically on working at height, a number of RoSPA courses also have content relating to the topic:

[NEBOSH Construction](#)

[Risk Assessments](#)

[Confined Spaces](#)

[IOSH Managing Safely](#)

[NEBOSH National Certificate](#)

About RoSPA

RoSPA (The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) is a registered charity and one of the UK's leading safety organisations. Through our [workplace safety training](#), [consultancy](#), [fleet](#), [awards](#) and [membership services](#), we work with organisations within the UK and overseas.

Why choose RoSPA training?

RoSPA offers one of the widest ranges of health and safety training courses and in-company safety training in the UK, from operative level right up to director and board level. We are one of the leading providers of NEBOSH and IOSH accredited courses, manual handling, safer people handling, auditor training and core health and safety training courses, covering a wide range of topics within the areas of risk assessment and the management of occupational safety.

We also lead the way in practical health and safety consultancy and audits. Tailored services provide a service that suits and ensures you're fully compliant and - above all - safe.

Which courses does RoSPA offer?

[NEBOSH Courses](#)

[IOSH Courses](#)

[Safer People Handling](#)

[Manual Handling](#)

[Core safety skills](#)

[Practical skills](#)

[Auditor training](#)

[In-company training](#)



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