

Health & Safety Management Plan

Appendix B –Specific Policies and Procedures

7. Working at Height Policy

Policy Statement

We are committed to ensuring that everyone in our workplaces is safe when carrying out work at height.

Purpose

The procedures below provide guidance on managing risk when working at height.

Definition

Working at height means working in a place where a person could be injured if they fell from one level to another. This can be above or below ground level. Work at height does not include slipping, tripping or falling at the same level.

Responsibilities

Managers must take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure:

- the safety of workers when they are exposed to a fall or where the risk of falling exists.
- that work at height is never carried out alone
- that wherever possible, safety equipment is used to prevent fall from height
- that work at height is planned out prior to commencing and all risks have been identified, with suitable controls established.

Workers must take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure:

- their own safety while at work; and
- that no action or inaction of the worker while at work, causes harm to any other person(s); and
- that any work at height work is planned out prior to commencing
- that work at height is done within the parameters set by Worksafe NZ.

Procedure to be followed

Where the potential to fall exists, the following simple hierarchy of controls should be considered:

1. Can the job be done without exposing persons to the hazard, i.e. can you eliminate the hazard altogether?
2. If elimination is not practicable, then steps should be taken to protect people from the hazard. This can be achieved using safe working platforms, guardrail systems, edge protection, scaffolding, elevated work platforms, mobile scaffolds and barriers to restrict access.

3. If none of the above options are possible, consider the use of work positioning systems, safety harnesses, soft landing systems and rope access systems. Those using such safety systems must have received specific training in their use. A contractor will likely be needed for work of this type.

For work below 5 metres, sometimes a temporary work platform will be sufficient to prevent a fall. If regular work at height is going to be required, parishes should consider purchasing this equipment or, alternatively, companies like Hire Pool and Hire Quip have temporary work platforms for hire.

If a parish is unable to provide a safe way for workers to carry out work at height, then a contractor should be brought in who can provide his/her own safety protection and has been properly trained in its use. This work will still need to be monitored by the parish to ensure it is carried out safely.

Use of Ladders

Ladders do not offer any protection from a fall. They should only be used for low risk and short duration tasks. Work above 3 metres is not considered low risk and an alternative option should be sought.

The following basic safety rules must be followed when working on a ladder:

- Do not overload the ladder – stick to the safe working load stated on the ladder.
- Do not overreach. Keep your belt buckle within the stiles and both feet on the same rung while working. Never stand on the top two rungs.
- Keep the rungs free from any items and do not hang tools from the rungs. Carry any tools you are using on a tool belt.
- Keep three points of contact on the ladder at all times – two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand while climbing, and two feet and one hand when working.
- Ladders must be trade or industrial standard and be rated at not less than 120kg.

Ladders should be checked before use to ensure they are in good condition. This includes having undamaged feet.

Whenever possible the ladder should be positioned and secured to prevent it slipping or falling:

- Tie (or effectively secure) the ladder at the top. If not possible, tie the ladder where practicable
- Use an effective ladder stability device
- Wedge the ladder against a suitable fixed structure, eg, a wall
- 'Foot' the ladder by facing it with both feet on the bottom rung, each foot as far apart as possible on the rung (stile to stile) and both hands on the stiles. The person footing the ladder should stay in position until the person using the ladder has descended to a point where they can safely step on to the ground. The user and footer should not overload the ladder.

When using a step ladder always face the steps of the ladder towards the work you are doing and avoid side loading. Step platforms are a safer alternative to a step ladder as they are more stable and have a larger work surface. These can be purchased from a number of stores, including Mitre 10.

Information taken from the Working at Height Best Practice Guidelines, 2014.