

## 4.25 Working at Height

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### Rationale and Scope

Falling from height often results in injury which permanently incapacitates a person. Being hit by falling objects or falling through, or from, roofs or unsuitable work platforms can result in fatalities.

The University of New England has a legal obligation under Section 8 of the Occupational Health & Safety Act 2000 to ensure the health and safety of its workers, students and others at the workplace. The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001 and various Codes of Practice specifically address work at a height of more than two metres, falling objects and fall prevention control measures.

The University is aware that some staff and other parties, need to work at heights in the course of undertaking their normal work duties. Trades work is increasingly being outsourced but staff may still be exposed to certain work at height related risks.

### Principles

Working on roofs has been identified as a high risk activity for both staff and contractors.

It is a legislative requirement that persons working at height are provided with fall prevention or fall arrest systems.

It is the ultimate goal of the University to provide anchor points and/or permanent walkways on all roofs or roof spaces which need to be accessed. This is a long term goal and may take some time to achieve. In the meantime, the University intends to effectively manage those risks associated with working at height and minimise the potential for harm to occur.

### Definitions

*The following definitions are only intended to apply to this policy.*

*Anchorage points* – are secure points for lifelines and lanyards

*Competent person* – is a person who has acquired through training, qualification, experience or a combination of these, the knowledge and skill to perform the task correctly.

*Fall arrest system* – is any device to minimise the length and severity of a fall.

*Fall prevention* – is perimeter fencing or a system where the worker must take action to use equipment designed to prevent them entering a fall hazard.

*Three point of contact* – At least 3 limbs holding, wrapped around or standing on the ladder in any combinations, e.g. 2 hands and one foot or two feet and one hand on the ladder.

### **Policy**

- 4.25.1 Where possible, the University will use design and relocation controls to reduce the need for work at height.
- 4.25.2 A documented risk management approach will be used to ensure safety while working at heights of over 1.8 metres.
- 4.25.3 All harnesses, fall arresting/travel restricting systems, ladders, safety footwear and associated equipment must comply with the current Australian Standards.
- 4.25.4 To avoid the risk of electrocution, work near overhead powerlines, can only be carried out where staff have been trained, have been provided and safe work procedures are documented and suitable ladders and adequate protection is provided.

### **Work platforms**

- 4.25.5 A stable work platform must be provided for any work at height.
- 4.25.6 Guardrails on work platforms, including scaffolding, should be between 900-1100mm above the working surface and have a top rail, mid-rail and a toe-board or include an infill panel which incorporates a kick-plate.
- 4.25.7 Platforms used in conjunction with a trestle ladder must have a minimum width of 450mm and must be supported across their entire width.
- 4.25.8 Provision must be made for a safe means of movement between different levels when working at height.

### **Ladders**

- 4.25.9 All ladders must be;
  - a) used only for the purposes for which they have been designed
  - b) manufactured for industrial use
  - c) have a load rating of at least 120 kg

- d) erected on a stable surface
- e) placed at an angle of approximately 70 degrees when in use
- f) prevented from moving while in use

**4.25.10** Stiles of ladders must extend at least one metre above the stepping off point

**4.25.11** Metal ladders and of wire bound ladders must not be used near powerlines

**4.25.12** Conditions of stepladder use require that ;

- a) workers must not stand on the top two steps of a stepladder unless an appropriately guarded working platform is incorporated in to the ladder design;
- b) work requiring the simultaneous release of both hands may only be carried out if the height is below 1.8metres does not require over reaching or cause fatigue;
- c) both hands must be used to grip the step ladder when ascending and descending;
- d) all tools must be used and supported in a manner that does not affect the centre of gravity of the user; and
- e) leaning towards the ladder is permitted as it does not adversely affect the centre of gravity.

#### **Research and other academic activities**

**4.25.13** Risk assessments must be conducted to identify whether machines and other equipment have the potential to create falling objects or fall from height risks.

**4.25.14** Fall prevention measures must be in place for on campus and identified fieldwork risks

#### **Theatre and sporting activities**

**4.25.15** Staff involved with work at height in drama and theatre activities must comply with *Australian Entertainment Industry Guidelines* [http://www.aeia.org.au/pdf/EmployerGuide\\_OHSEntertain.pdf](http://www.aeia.org.au/pdf/EmployerGuide_OHSEntertain.pdf)

**4.25.16** Staff supervising sporting or leisure activities involving the potential for falls from height must ensure compliance with the *Health & Safety for Artificial Climbing Structures and Operations Code of Practice 2002* [www.workcover.nsw.gov.au](http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au) and the *Australian Adventure Activity Standards* which can be downloaded from [www.orc.org.au/aas/view\\_standards.htm](http://www.orc.org.au/aas/view_standards.htm)

### **Cleaning**

- 4.25.17 Safe work procedures must be followed when carrying out housekeeping tasks which have the potential for falling objects or falls from height, e.g. cob webbing, cleaning windows, blinds, gutter cleaning.
- 4.25.18 A suitable work-platform must be used when carrying out minor tasks, e.g. painting, trimming ivy.
- 4.25.19 Light bulbs situated at a height of over two metres must be replaced by competent persons.

### **Roof spaces**

- 4.25.20 A permit must be issued prior to entry to roof spaces which do not comply with access requirements of AS 1657 or UNE design standards.
- 4.25.21 Roof spaces which have the potential of atmospheric contamination and are not naturally ventilated must be considered as confined spaces.

### **Roofs**

- 4.25.22 A permit is required from Facilities Management Services in order to gain access or undertake work on the roof of any University building.
- 4.25.23 The general information data provided in the University or workplace roof register must be considered when assessing the level of risk posed by any roof related activity and deciding on suitable controls.
- 4.25.24 No routine roof maintenance work will be carried out during adverse weather conditions (e.g. high winds, wet, frost covered).
- 4.25.25 Fall prevention or fall arrest controls must be used when working within two metres of a roof edge which has no perimeter protection.
- 4.25.26 All footwear used while working on roofs must have a non-slip tread pattern.

### **Training**

- 4.25.27 A certificate of competency is required for the design or erection of scaffolding over 4 metres in height.
- 4.25.28 Doggers, riggers, crane operators, hoist operators and operators of other plant used for working at height must have relevant certification.
- 4.25.29 All staff using fall arrest devices must be trained in the assembly and use of the system.
- 4.25.30 All staff working within two metres of the edge of roofs, which do not have permanent walkways or full perimeter fencing, must have received training in the use of harnesses, ropes and accessories

### Procedures

- 4.25.31 All workers planning to work at height must document their risk assessment and safe work method. Generic risk assessments may be used.
- 4.25.32 Supervisors must review risk assessments and any measures adopted to control the risk whenever there is a significant change proposed at the place of work or work at height practices or procedures.
- 4.25.33 Risk assessments may be amended, if on-site conditions change or if an alternative method is required.
- 4.25.34 Supervisors must ensure that persons whose judgement may be, or appears to be impaired by alcohol and drugs are not permitted to work at height.
- 4.25.35 All harnesses must be inspected prior to use and results logged in a maintenance record sheet.
- 4.25.36 At least two persons must be present at all times, if a fall arrest system is used.
- 4.25.37 Unless the worker is wearing a pole strap or fall arrest system not attached to the ladder, the “three point of contact “applies when working on a ladder,

### Special conditions for Contractors

- 4.25.38 All tender documents will require that contractors supply risk assessment and safe work method statements for proposed work at height.

### Further Information

Occupational Health and Safety Unit ext 3232  
e-mail: [ohs@une.edu.au](mailto:ohs@une.edu.au)

### References

*The following references were used in the compilation of this policy.*

*Occupational Health & Safety Act 2000*

*Occupational Health & Safety Regulation 2001 Division 2 Fall prevention s39-Div 3 Electricity s40-42 Division 6 Working at height s56—61*

*WorkCover NSW Safe Work at Height Guide 2004*

*WorkCover NSW Safe Work on Roofs Part 1 – Commercial and Industrial Buildings Code of Practice 1993*

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*WorkCover NSW Safe Work on Roofs Part 2 – Residential Buildings Code of Practice 1997*

*WorkCover NSW Overhead Protective Structures Code of Practice*

*WorkCover NSW Safety Line Systems Code of Practice 1995*

*WorkCover NSW Electrical Practices for Construction Work*

*AS/NZS 1891; Industrial fall-arrest systems and devices*

*AS/NZS 1891.1 Safety belts and harnesses*

*AS/NS 1891:3 Fall arrest devices*

*AS/NZS 1892 Portable ladders*

*AS 4626 Industrial fall- arrest devices- Selection use and maintenance*

*NB The above references were current when the Policy was approved. It is recommended that in order to ensure legislative compliance, the above reference documents are checked to ensure that there have been no amendments.*