



SAFETY STEPS: ESSENTIAL MESSAGES FOR WORK AT HEIGHT!

Safety Steps' is designed to help all those who produce outputs that are aimed at maintaining and improving safety during work at height (WAH), for the following audiences:

- designers
- clients
- managers (those managing WAH)
- supervisors*, and
- operatives*

Safety Steps is an *enabling* document. It provides essential messages that can be used - in whole or part - by those who aim to produce any type of output for these five target audiences. As such (with the possible exception of information for designers) is not designed to be deployed directly to these target audiences (*though the Safety Steps for Supervisors and Operatives are written in the first person, so that the content can be more easily adapted for other use in further outputs and communication channels).

As such, outputs derived from/informed by Safety Steps may include (and are not restricted to):

- Flow charts/infographics
- Training materials
- Toolbox talks/checklists
- Poster/sticker campaigns
- Rules and guidelines

Safety Steps covers *general information* on WAH rather than task-specific aspects. So, for example, the messages don't provide information about specific situations such as the use of scaffolding or mobile work platforms or working on roofs. However, the general information provided underpins any, more specific, WAH messages and information.

User comments

Safety Steps will be reviewed by CONIAC from time to time, to ensure that the general messages and other information continues to be suitable for the purpose above. If you have any comments on Safety Steps (including suggestions for changes, noting the intended purpose above) please contact: <https://accessindustryforum.org.uk/safety-steps/feedback/>

Conditions of use

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Any commercial use should also refer readers to an e-location where Safety Steps is freely available.



Work at height (WAH): Safety Steps for...

4. SUPERVISORS

Ensuring a Safe system of work (SSoW) at height	Examples may include...
<p>Before starting work at height (WAH), check if the relevant risks have been assessed and that there is a safe system of work (SSoW).</p> <p>The SSoW needs to reflect the risk and complexity of the activity: it follows that it <i>may be very simple if the task is simple, and the risk of harm is low.</i></p> <p>For low risk, short duration activity, the SSoW need not be written down, but it must be properly communicated.</p> <p>The SSoW must be consistent with the intended work, the work environment, and the personnel involved.</p> <p>If in doubt, refer to your line manager.</p>	<p>A risk assessment (RA) should consider any increased risks due to; e.g. confined spaces, other trades or the public nearby, and any specific need for rescue procedures and equipment.</p> <p>The SSoW needs to be proportionate to the risk involved, and the complexity of the activity. For low risk work at height, particularly if it's of short duration, the SSoW may be very simple. For more complex or higher risk activity, however, the SSoW should be more detailed.</p> <p>Your manager or senior supervisor should tell you about the relevant parts of any construction phase plan, and about any detailed safe system of work (e.g. a method statement). In some situations, this may include rescue provision.</p> <p>An RA and SSoW will need to take any significant workplace changes into account, such as the workers involved, weather, duration of the work at height, and method of rescue.</p>
<p>Provided the SSoW is consistent with the WAH - follow the SSoW and communicate this to all involved</p>	<p>The SSoW of work must be relevant, and proportionate, to the risks and activity involved.</p>
<p>If it is <i>not</i> consistent with the WAH - highlight the need for changes to the risk assessment and SSoW to the person managing the SSoW - before starting work.</p> <p>Check the necessary changes have been made and communicate these to all involved before starting the work.</p> <p>You may suspend any aspect of work at height, which you have reasonable cause to believe may be unsafe.</p>	<p>Consider whether you are competent to make any 'at site' changes to the RA (dynamic risk assessment) or the SSoW and if you do, how these will be recorded and communicated.</p> <p>You will need to have the authority to make any changes. If you are not competent to do so, or you are unsure, refer to your line manager.</p> <p>Brief all those involved about the correct RA and SSoW.</p>



Construction Industry Advisory Committee (CONIAC)

Managing Risk Well Working Group

Simplifying risk management and helping business to grow

#HelpGBWorkWell

<p>Before starting, ensure, whenever possible, that you are working from an existing safe place of work.</p>	<p>Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable parapet walls • Suitable and robust working platform/area • Defined access/egress points • A flat roof with permanent edge protection • Fixed guard rails e.g. around plant, machinery, excavations/holes
<p>Ensure that ladders and steps are only used as access (and without heavy or awkward loads), or for low risk and short duration work at height.</p>	<p>Follow good practice when using access equipment</p>
<p>If other risk control measures (safety/access equipment) are required, ensure that they are suitable for the task, the work environment and those who are working at height.</p> <p>Include any rescue equipment and procedures.</p>	<p>Examples may include:</p> <p>Collective protection to prevent a fall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaffolding • Temporary edge protection • Platform decking • Mobile towers • MEWPs <p>Personal protection to prevent a fall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restraints, including fixed lanyards and harnesses • Horizontal line systems <p>Collective measures to minimize distance or consequences of a fall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety netting • Airbags or soft-landing systems <p>Personal measures to minimize distance or consequences of a fall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial rope access • Personal fall arrest system with secure, reliable anchor points <p>Ensure all equipment is used safely.</p>
<p>Monitoring WAH</p>	<p>Monitor the work for any significant changes that would undermine the safe system of work you are using (e.g. equipment has been dismantled, bad working practice).</p>

Skills, knowledge and experience – ensure that

All workers involved have sufficient skills, knowledge and experience to do the job safely, including familiarity with all relevant equipment.



That the correct SSoW has been communicated and is understood by all

Anyone who is being trained works only under the supervision of a competent person, in accordance with the safe system of work

Equipment for working at height - ensure that:

All access equipment is assembled or installed, used, maintained and stored according to the manufacturer's instructions and good industry practice

Where the effectiveness of equipment depends on how it has been assembled or installed, that the equipment has been inspected by a competent person before work commences, in line with any regulatory requirements.

Any access or safety equipment is inspected regularly and any damaged equipment (e.g. due to physical wear, weather, or chemicals) – or any equipment with unauthorized modifications - is withdrawn, replaced or repaired, as necessary to ensure safety

All equipment inspections are recorded to minimum statutory guidelines, any manufacturer guidelines.

All working platforms from where a person could fall are inspected;

- At least every seven days
- After assembly or adaptation in any position
- After any event likely to affect strength or stability (including adverse weather)
- Following the actual deployment of safety equipment (e.g. a fall into a safety net or air bag system)

Key points

Ensure that:

- the correct safety equipment is provided
- sufficient time has been allocated so that the task can be completed safely
- working surfaces are not overloaded with materials or equipment, and that they are kept clear (good housekeeping)
- workers can get safely to and from where they will work at height, and appear to be fit to do so
- all surfaces for placing or attaching WAH equipment are stable and strong enough for use
- any changes to work activity are re-assessed, and any changes that may affect safety are dealt with before work commences or continues
- sufficient protection from falling objects is provided (e.g. materials and work equipment) for anyone who may be below (public or other workers)
- the activity is properly segregated / cordoned off from passers by
- no one is put to work who shows any obvious sign of being unfit to work at height
- work practices do not allow hazardous distractions from the task (e.g. using mobiles while accessing)
- any designated rescue plan is achievable.

Supervisors