

Working at Height — Implementation Guide

Read this first.

The legal position

The Work at Height Regulations 2005 apply to any work where a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal injury. There is **NO** minimum height. The regulations set a hierarchy: **AVOID** work at height where reasonably practicable; where it cannot be avoided, **PREVENT** falls using an existing safe place of work or suitable equipment; and where the risk remains, **MINIMISE** the distance and consequences of a fall.

Why this matters here

Falls from height killed 31 workers in 2025/26, the single largest cause of workplace deaths. Most were short falls from ladders, stepladders and fragile surfaces, not from scaffolds.

What the law asks for

Requirement	Source	What it means here
Avoid work at height where reasonably practicable	WAHR 2005 reg 6	Do it from the ground. Extending poles, prefabrication, remote inspection
Prevent falls using equipment or an existing safe place	WAHR 2005 reg 6	Guard rails, working platforms, tower scaffolds, MEWPs
Minimise distance and consequences where risk remains	WAHR 2005 reg 6	Nets, airbags, fall arrest as a last resort
Plan, supervise and carry out safely	WAHR 2005 reg 4	Including weather and emergency rescue
Inspect work equipment	WAHR 2005 reg 12 and Sch 7	Scaffolds inspected before use and at least every 7 days
Competence	WAHR 2005 reg 5	Trained, assessed and authorised for the equipment used

The order to do it in

1. Complete the risk assessment (WAH-01) for your own site. Walk it, do not just sign it.
2. Adopt the safe system of work (WAH-02) and put a copy where the work happens.
3. Start the monitoring record (WAH-03).
4. Deliver the training (WAH-04). Your own supervisor, about an hour.
5. Test knowledge (WAH-05). Candidate paper blank, answers in ink. Mark with the key.
6. Assess practically (WAH-06) on your own site and equipment.
7. Authorise in writing (WAH-07). The document most firms are missing.
8. Run the toolbox talks (WAH-08) and keep the signed sheets.
9. Log everybody on the register (WAH-09) and diary the refreshers.

Half a day of setup, then about an hour per person.

Refresher interval

There is no legally fixed interval. HSE expects refresher training at a frequency justified by risk. Three years is common practice, and sooner after any incident, near miss, new equipment or change of process.

Scope and limitations — read before use

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