

TOOLBOX TALK

Working at height toolbox talk

About six minutes · Work at Height Regulations 2005

SITE

DATE

GIVEN BY

WHY IT MATTERS

Falls from height killed 31 workers in Great Britain in 2025/26, more than any other kind of accident. Many of those falls were not from the top of a tall scaffold. HSE says falls from roofs, and through fragile roofs and rooflights, are among the most common causes of death at work. People also fall from ladders, and from edges and openings that were going to be guarded later.

None of the people who died planned to fall. They were doing a job they had done before, often a short one, and the thing that would have stopped the fall was not there that day. This talk is about making sure it is there.

HSE, Work-related fatal injuries in Great Britain 2025/26 (provisional)

THE POINTS TO MAKE

- ☐ **Any height counts**
Working at height is anywhere you could fall far enough to be hurt. The back of a lorry, a stepladder, a floor edge before the handrail goes on, a loading bay. There is no height below which the rules stop applying.
- ☐ **Prevent the fall before you catch it**
A platform with guardrails, a tower, a scaffold or a MEWP stops you falling in the first place. A harness, a net or an airbag only limits the damage after you have fallen. Prevention comes first, every time.
- ☐ **Check the kit before you use it**
Look at the ladder, the tower, the platform or the harness before you trust your weight to it. Bent stiles, missing feet, a tower without its guardrails or outriggers, a scaffold with a tag out of date or a board missing: stop and get it sorted. A scaffold you could fall two metres from is inspected within the last seven days, and after anything like bad weather. The report is on site.
- ☐ **Harnesses need a plan**
If you are wearing a harness, you need a rated anchor point, a lanyard short enough that you cannot hit anything, and a rescue plan. A person hanging in a harness can be in serious trouble within minutes. Who gets you down, and how, is agreed before the job starts, not after the fall.
- ☐ **Avoid it first**
The law puts the choices in order. Can the job be done from the ground, with an extending pole, a lowered fitting or by assembling at ground level? If it can, that is the method. Only then do we look at how to work up there safely.
- ☐ **Ladders are for short, light jobs**
A ladder is allowed where the job is low risk and short, no more than half an hour at a time, and you can keep a secure handhold. It must be in good condition, on firm level ground, at the right angle and tied at both stiles. Footing is the last resort, not the first. If you need both hands or you are stretching, it is the wrong kit.
- ☐ **Fragile roofs and openings**
Old cement sheets, rooflights, skylights and glass will not hold a person. Treat every roof as fragile until someone competent has confirmed it is not. Openings, stairwells, lift shafts and floor edges need a proper guardrail or a fixed, marked cover before anyone works near them.

SITE	DOCUMENT Working at height toolbox talk	REVISION	DATE	PAGE 1 of 3
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TOOLBOX TALK, CONTINUED

Working at height toolbox talk: do, do not, and the questions

DO

- Ask whether the job can be done from the ground before anyone goes up.
- Use a platform with guardrails over a ladder whenever you can.
- Check ladders, towers, platforms and harnesses before every use, and report defects.
- Keep a secure handhold on a ladder, face it, and do not overreach.
- Keep tools and materials from falling: toe boards, tool lanyards, nothing left on the edge.
- Stop and ask if the weather turns, the ground is soft or the kit is not what the method statement says.

DO NOT

- Do not work off the top three rungs of a leaning ladder, or the top three steps of a stepladder unless there is a suitable handhold.
- Do not step onto a roof, rooflight or fragile sheet without confirmation it will take your weight and the controls in place.
- Do not alter a scaffold, remove a guardrail or move a tower with people or materials on it.
- Do not use a pallet on a forklift, a bucket on an excavator or a stack of materials as a working platform.
- Do not work at height alone where nobody would know you had fallen.
- Do not wear a harness without a rated anchor point and a rescue plan you have been told.

ASK THE TEAM

- ? Where on this site today could someone fall far enough to be hurt?
- ? What are we using to get up there, and why is that the safest option that would do the job?
- ? When was the scaffold last inspected, and where is the tag or the report?
- ? Which roofs or rooflights on this job are fragile, and how do we know?
- ? If someone is left hanging in a harness, who gets them down and how?

TO CLOSE

Nobody falls on purpose. People fall because the handrail was off for ten minutes, the ladder was handy, the rooflight looked solid, or the job was nearly done. If what you are about to stand on would not hold a friend, do not stand on it. Stop, ask, and we will sort it.

Record it. Who gave the talk, where, when, who was there and what was raised. The last page is the record.

SITE	DOCUMENT Working at height toolbox talk	REVISION	DATE	PAGE 2 of 3
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ATTENDANCE RECORD

Working at height toolbox talk: given and understood

Each person signs on the day to say they were present and understood the talk. Anyone who joins the team later is given the talk before starting, and signs here.

SITE	DATE	TIME	GIVEN BY
NAME	COMPANY	TRADE OR ROLE	SIGNATURE

QUESTIONS RAISED, AND THE ANSWERS GIVEN

ACTIONS AGREED, WHO AND BY WHEN

TALK GIVEN BY (SIGNATURE)	POSITION	DATE

MANAGEMENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK REGULATIONS 1999, REGULATION 10: INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYEES

SITE	DOCUMENT Working at height toolbox talk	REVISION	DATE	PAGE 3 of 3
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