

# Working at Heights

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# Introduction

## **1.1 Context**

From time to time, employees will be required to carry out some tasks while working at height. It is important that all employees are aware of the correct procedure when dealing with:

- Working on stepladders
- Working on kicks tools.
- Performing regular checks of such equipment.

## **1.2 Purpose**

The aim of this policy is to provide guidance on the practices required to ensure that all employees who work at height are protected from unnecessary injury.

## **1.3 Scope**

This policy applies to any member of staff who is required to work at height during the course of their duties. Working at Height tasks are those that involves the use of any kick-stool or step ladder.

# Procedure

## 2.1 Responsibilities

The company will ensure that work at height is:

- Properly planned.
- Appropriately supervised.
- Carried out in a manner which is safe.

All employees have a duty to:

- Follow instructions in relating to work at height.
- Use any stepladders or kick-stools provided in a safe way and in line with instruction and on-line training provided.
- Raise any concerns about the condition of the equipment or risks of the task with their line manager.

## 2.2 Equipment

### Kick stools

- Kick stools are used for accessing goods in the stock room, sales floor and also the dispensary.
- **They are used to access goods at low level. E.g. just above head height.**
- Kick stools must not be left on the sales floor; otherwise a customer may be tempted to use them to access goods which are out of reach.

### Stepladders

- Step ladders are generally used for accessing goods in the stock room and putting up signage.
- They should be stored in a safe and secure location whilst being accessible to trained users.
- Stepladder designs vary – Some have a platform with a handrail whilst others are a simple A-frame design.

## **2.3 Planning the task**

The first question to ask is whether a stepladder or kick stool is the most suitable equipment for the task.

### **Stepladders and kicks stools should be used:**

- When loads are less than 10kg.
- The work is simple and does not last over 30 mins.
- Where the task will not require the user to lean out. If you cannot reach, move the equipment or find a safer way of doing the task.
- If you are considering using a step ladder it has to be the right size for the task.
- You should never stand on the top three steps of an A frame step ladder , or the top two steps of a step ladder with a platform , unless the step ladder is designed for that purpose and has a secure handhold.

### **If a step ladder is the most appropriated tool you need to:**

- Check you have the correct step ladder for the job. Is it too short or too long for the task you will be doing?
- Ensure that you can work comfortably without overreaching (Up , down or sideways)
- Check the environment – is anything likely to bang into or knock the step ladder - e.g. doors opening into the step ladder.
- Check that no other people will be affected by the task.
- Ensure that the step ladder will be positioned on a stable surface.

## **2.4 Inspect the equipment**

### **Kick- stools**

- The grips on the steps and the rubber rim at the bottom are present and in good condition.
- The spring loaded castors retract as weight is applied and the base ring locks to the floor.

### **Step ladders**

- The stays (arms that lock the legs into position) and hinges are in good condition and if present the chains or cords are of sufficient and equal length.
- The rubber or plastic, non-slip feet are present and in good condition on all feet.
- The legs or stiles (outside uprights), steps and the platform are in good condition.

## 2.5 Visual inspections of the area

- Once you have selected the correct equipment for the task and ensured it is safe to use, you need to set it up without overstretching before each use.
- **Always** position the equipment on a firm, clean and level surface.
- If you are using a step ladder then make sure that it is locked into position with the legs as far apart as the cords / hinges allow.
- Never use a step ladder in a closed position.
- Where possible position the step ladder or kick stool so that you face the work you are doing.
- This helps prevent the equipment from becoming unstable.
- If you have to use a step ladder or kick stool in front of a doorway, then the door should be wedged open or ask a colleague to act as a look out.  
If your task could affect others e.g. customers, then cordon off the area

## 2.6 Preparing for the task

We have looked at how to prepare for your task and also how to inspect a stepladder and kick stool to ensure it is safe to use. We will now look at how to use this equipment safely. There are three key points to consider:

- Maintain three points of contact at all time while using a stepladder. If you need to use both hands for the task, three points of contact cab include the torso or a knee instead of a hand.
- Don't overreach. Make sure you always face the stepladder and use both hands when climbing up and down. Keep your body central on the stepladder – ensure your navel stays within the sides and keep both feet on the same rung throughout the task. Avoid working to the side of the stepladder – this is the most common cause of accidents. Keep both feet on the stepladder and ensure that you maintain three points of contact.

Never work from the top three steps of an A-frame stepladder or the top two steps of a stepladder with a platform, unless the stepladder is designed for that purpose and has a secure handhold. As a general rule, keep your knees below the top step.

## 2.6 Quarterly Inspections

All working at height equipment must also be inspected quarterly by a colleague who has completed the online eLearning module.

Never use a step ladder or kick stool that is defective or attempt to repair damage. Always take it out of service, label it as defective and report it immediately to your line manager.

## 2.7 Key Points

When conducting any work at height you must always plan the task before you begin. Always inspect the area and taking into consideration the work required you should select the correct equipment. Remember to check all equipment before you commence any work. Never twist or try to over-reach while conducting work at height. Always ask for assistance from another employee should you be unable to complete the task on your own.

The key points to remember are:

- Maintain three points of contact
  - Do not over-reach
  - Do not overload the equipment
  - Keep your hands below the top step
  - The ladder/equipment should be undamaged
  - It should be the right height for the job
  - Wear flat shoes and consider if you are fit for working at heights
  - Make sure the four non-slip feet are in place
  - Make sure the ground is firm and level
  - Face the task front on
  - Make sure you have a good grip and do not over-reach
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- **Remember if at any time you have any questions to speak to your line manager**

## 2.8 Additional Support

Additional support for managers and employees is available through the following:

- Business Manager
- Health & Safety Coordinator
- Human Resources Department