



Systemic Safety Alert

Work-at-Height/ work above ground

Major systemic safety problems

Most of the serious/ fatal accidents related to falls from heights are attributed to failure to provide or ensure the use of suitable and safe working platforms/ means of supports for workers. The major systemic safety problems include: -

- failure to conduct task-specific risk assessments and formulate safe work methods in accordance with the risk assessments;
- failure to implement safe work methods and adopt necessary risk control measures for work-at-height/ work above ground, including absence of suitable safe working platforms/ means of supports/ fall protection systems and ensure their proper use;
- failure to provide adequate safety information, instruction and training; and
- lack of effective control and supervision.

Accident prevention measures

Registered Safety Officers (RSOs) should advise their employers/ clients to: -

- (i) appoint a competent person to conduct task-specific risk assessments to identify all associated potential hazards;
- (ii) formulate safe work methods according to the risk assessments and adopt necessary control measures. Where practicable, safer work methods (such as using specific hand tools) to avoid work-at-height/ work above ground should first be adopted. Secondly, proper working platforms/ means of support should be provided, and the provision/ use of fall protection systems should be regarded as the last resort;
- (iii) provide suitable working platforms/ means of supports (such as light-duty platforms, step-platforms or hop-up platforms with suitable guard-rails and toe-boards);



- (iv) ensure workers the proper use of working platforms/ means of support, for example not overstretching the bodies outside the platforms/ supports at work;
- (v) give special attention to the places of work at/ near staircase landings/ balconies of buildings (even with the provision of permanent railings), with due consideration of whether the railings can offer effective protection at work;
- (vi) provide workers concerned with suitable fully body safety harnesses, secure anchor points, independent lifelines and fall arrestors as appropriate, and ensure their proper use when the use of safe working platforms/ means of support is not practicable and after consideration of the particular hazards from places of work;
- (vii) provide workers concerned and ensure their proper use of suitable safety helmets equipped with chin straps;
- (viii) provide workers concerned with necessary safety information, instruction and training;
- (ix) exercise adequate monitoring and effective supervision to ensure all safety measures are strictly implemented, followed and maintained;
- (x) ensure all levels of site management/ supervisory personnel and workers clearly understand their own safety responsibilities; and
- (xi) avoid the use of ladders while working at height/ work above ground.

Registered Safety Auditors (RSAs) should take into account these systemic safety problems and accident prevention measures in executing safety audit functions.



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