



## FACT SHEET

SAFEWORK NSW

# FALLS – SAFETY GUIDE

Deaths and injuries from falls are preventable. This guide outlines some of the common hazards that result in falls and action you can take to avoid them.

## IDENTIFY THE HAZARDS

Many tasks conducted in manufacturing require working at heights. Common examples include:

- accessing machinery for set-up, repairs, maintenance, cleaning, or loading product
- working on mezzanines, elevated walkways and platforms
- using ladders or accessing storage racking
- working on loading docks or on the back of trucks.

Inspect your workplace and talk to the workers doing the job to identify the hazards. Listen to their views about how to safely do the work and draw on their experience and ideas. Be sure to pay attention to both routine tasks and unusual, non-routine or infrequent tasks.

## PLAN THE WORK

Whether it's a routine task or a one-off job, stop and plan the work to eliminate or control the risk of a fall.

Wherever possible, perform the work from ground level. Look for alternatives that eliminate or minimise working at height when planning the job.

If you must work from height, always manage the risk of a fall. Use equipment that will prevent a fall, such as:

- work platforms; either permanent or temporary, such as scaffolding
- safety barriers, handrails or some other form of edge protection
- fixed covers over holes and penetrations
- equipment designed to lift people such as order pickers, boom lifts or scissor lifts.

If it's not possible to use equipment that will prevent a fall, your next best option is to use either:

- a harness as a work-positioning system, where the worker is restricted from falling
- a harness or safety net, meaning if the worker does fall, it is arrested to prevent a serious injury.

If you use a work-positioning or fall arrest system, there must be suitable anchor points, workers and supervisors must be trained and you must have emergency and rescue procedures in place.

## MEZZANINES

Mezzanines are often used for manufacturing, storage and office space. However, some mezzanine floors are not constructed appropriately or are used in a way they were not designed for. Unprotected mezzanines pose a risk of falling off the edge or falling when gaining access.

If you have a mezzanine, ensure that:

- it is engineered and constructed for the loads handled and stored on it, including any load handling equipment
- there is a structurally-sound and safe means to access the mezzanine. Ladders should not be used if people carry items when accessing the mezzanine
- there are structurally-sound safety barriers in place to stop people falling off the edge of the mezzanine. If this is a handrail, use mid rails and toe boards to prevent items from falling
- gaps in guard rails used for loading/unloading items on the mezzanine are guarded by gates or removable handrails that can be safely removed and replaced.

## LOADING DOCKS

Falls can occur from loading docks during loading operations and when not in use. When vehicles are in the loading bay, ensure that:

- a properly-engineered and well-maintained ramp bridges the gap between the vehicle and the loading bay, free of trip hazards
- edge protection is in place if there is an unprotected gap at the sides of the vehicle
- workers do not gain access by jumping on or off the loading bay. Safe access is encouraged by providing steps at a convenient location.

When the loading bay is not in use, the area should be secured or the edge protected by a temporary barrier.

## STORAGE RACKING

Serious injuries can occur when workers climb onto racking for repairs or to access items. If you have storage racking, ensure that:

- where possible, items are lowered to the ground to prevent picking items at height
- workers access racking using suitable lifting equipment, such as order pickers or scissor lifts
- workers climb onto racking only when there is no other way to perform the task, and risk controls are in place to prevent falls.

## LADDERS

Portable ladders should only be used for simple access jobs or for a short duration.

When a ladder is used, ensure that:

- the right type and size of ladder is used for the job. Consider if an A-frame or extension ladder is suitable, or if a platform ladder could be safer
- the ladder is in good condition
- the ladder is used on firm, stable and level ground
- The ladder is secured either at the top, bottom, or both to prevent slipping
- single or extension ladders are angled at a ratio of 1:4. That is, position the base of the ladder one metre away from the supporting structure for every four metres of height.
- there are always three points of contact with the ladder. This means two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand on the ladder at all times. This includes climbing up or down the ladder.

## SIMPLE SAFETY TIPS FOR WORKING AT HEIGHT

- ✓ Design plant and equipment to minimise the need to work at height.
- ✓ Design jobs to minimise the need to work at height.
- ✓ Plan the work and use the right equipment to safely access and work at heights.
- ✓ Train workers to work safely at heights and to use the fall prevention equipment provided.
- ✓ Manage the risk of falls on the same level by keeping work areas clean and clear of trip hazards, pathways and stairs in good condition and providing adequate footwear.

This fact sheet has been developed using the following resources:

- *Code of practice – Managing the risk of falls at workplaces* (catalogue no. SW08159), SafeWork NSW

For more information on working safely at heights, [www.safework.nsw.gov.au](http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au) or call 13 10 50

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