

Cross-industry Tips for Working From Height

These tips for working from height could prevent a nasty fall—or worse.

Preventing Back Pain

Heeding this proactive guidance can prevent back pain before it starts.



A monthly safety newsletter from
Crendon Insurance Brokers Limited

Cross-industry Tips for Working From Height

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the regulatory body responsible for workplace health and safety in England, Wales and Scotland, invited companies from the construction industry and its associated trades to a mock trial in September to give their verdicts on a fictitious health and safety prosecution. The mock trial focused on a fictional incident in which an employee from a painting and decorating firm working on a refurbishment project suffered serious injuries falling from height.

The mock trial was meant to highlight the serious dangers of working from height in the construction industry. Falls from height account for more than half of construction workplace deaths in Britain—from 2012 to 2013, 25 of the 46 deaths in the construction industry were the result of falls from height.

Even more distressing is the fact that every year, the construction industry reports more than 4,000 major injuries, such as broken bones or fractured skulls, which are caused by falls from height.

But construction is not the only industry plagued by working from height risks. Seemingly innocuous industries, such as education, also face serious working from height risks. The education sector alone experiences about one

death and 500 major injuries due to falls from height every single year.

No matter the industry, all employees can benefit from training on working from height. Here at , our employees' safety is our top concern. Therefore, follow this simple guidance for working from height to keep you and your co-workers safe:

- Avoid work at height where it is reasonably practicable to do so.
- Complete as much work as possible from the ground.
- Where work at height cannot be easily avoided, prevent falls by either working from an existing place that is already known to be safe or by using the right type of equipment.
- Do not overload or overreach when working at height.
- Take precautions when working on or near fragile surfaces.
- Use safe, secure ladders to reach something at height rather than standing on a chair.
- Inspect ladders before using them.

No matter what industry you work in, all employees can benefit from basic guidance on working from height. Follow these tips to keep you and your co-workers safe.



Preventing Back Pain

BackCare, a charity that aims to reduce the burden of back pain through education and by funding scientific research into the causes, prevention and management of back pain, declared that its annual Back Care Awareness Week is 6-12 October 2014. This year's theme was 'Back in the Office', spotlighting the back and shoulder problems office workers often face, which can severely compromise their quality of life and ability to work.

According to a recent study by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), more working days are lost due to back, neck and muscle pain than any other cause. In the United Kingdom during 2013, the ONS calculated that a massive 30.6 million working days were lost due to back problems. Neglecting to care for your back can drastically lessen the amount of days you are able to work.

Back pain can cut across all industries—employees do not need to work in the construction industry or undertake manual work to be afflicted by back problems. Employees of all kinds can benefit from the following back pain prevention guidance:

- Take small breaks throughout your working day and stretch regularly.
- Manage your stress level to reduce discomfort and back pain.
- Plan your working hours and duties to avoid long periods of repetitive work.
- Exercise and stay active to reduce your chances of developing back pain.
- Change the posture of your spine frequently—regularly changing your position helps lessen the burden on your back.
- Position the height of your desk chair so your feet are flat on the floor.
- Lift with your knees and keep what you are lifting close to your body.
- Drink sufficient water and eat a healthy diet—this helps with keeping your spinal discs hydrated and healthy.



Safety in NUMBERS 1²3



Falling from height

was the most common cause of fatal injury to workers

in 2012 and 2013, at **46 per cent.**

Source: HSE

Real-life Case Study

Last year, a London office worker was suffering from extreme lower back pain. The problem seemed to abate on weekends but would promptly return every Monday at work.

The employee consulted his GP, and his employer undertook a display screen risk assessment in an effort to identify the problem. But it still remained. What made matters more confounding was that the employee found his fully adjustable desk chair very comfortable. The company therefore resorted to hiring a health and safety consultancy.

During the investigation, the consultancy found that the castors fitted to the employee's chair were made of plastic, and the floor had a laminate covering. Plastic castors roll and swivel on hard surfaces, and due to this low amount of friction, the employee was unknowingly applying steady, significant pressure throughout his lower body to his feet, in order to keep the chair in position. By placing a small piece of square carpet underneath the chair, the company was able to immobilise the chair and eliminate the employee's back problem.

Contains public sector information published by the HSE and licensed under the Open Government Licence v1.0.

Design © 2014 Zywave, Inc. All rights reserved. This publication is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to be exhaustive nor should any discussion or opinions be construed as compliance or legal advice. In relation to any particular problem which they may have, readers are advised to seek specific advice. Further, the law may have changed since first publication and the reader is cautioned accordingly.