

Working at heights

Falling from any height can lead to death or long-term injuries.

Be on guard, see the risks Work safely at heights in construction

Most serious and fatal falls are from roofs, ladders or scaffolds – and from a height of between 2.1 and 4 metres.

Find out more

Ladders, incomplete scaffolds, falling off a truck, a roof edge or falling through fragile roof sheeting are the major causes of injuries.

These incidents largely happen in the construction, manufacturing, transport, postal and warehousing and agriculture industries.

SafeWork NSW inspectors regularly blitz construction sites to check compliance and talk with employers and workers about how to work safely at heights. Use this [checklist](#) to find out if your construction site is working at heights safely.

Hazards and risk controls

Eliminate the problem if it is reasonably practicable to do so.

Firstly, talk to everyone in your workplace. Listen to their views about working at heights. Draw on everyone's experience and ideas.

1. Work on the ground or on a solid construction

If you don't have to work at heights, don't. Working from the ground is always the safest option.

Designers should be looking for alternatives to working at heights during the design-phase of the project.

2. Use a fall-prevention device

If you have to work from a height, you need to manage the risk of a fall. A fall-prevention device is best because it will prevent your workers from falling. Examples include temporary work platforms, guardrails and scaffolding. All help to keep you safer when working at heights.

3. Use a work-positioning

When it is not possible to use a fall-prevention device, a work-positioning system is your next best option. A work-positioning system either prevents a fall hazard being reached e.g. restraint system, or enables a person to work supported in tension in a way that prevents the person from falling e.g. industrial rope access.

4. Use a fall-arrest system

A fall-arrest system is only used when it is not possible to use either a fall-prevention device or a work-positioning system. A fall-arrest system may not prevent a fall, however it stops a person who has fallen and reduces the impact of the fall and can reduce injuries in a fall. Examples include industrial safety nets, catch platforms or harness-based fall-arrest harnesses used with lifelines or individual anchors.

If you use a fall arrest system, you must have emergency and rescue procedures in place and test them to ensure they are effective.

Work safely at heights on roofs



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/cEgZhTozZ94>

How to manage risks of falls

Risks of falls

Falls from heights are the leading cause of traumatic fatalities in the NSW construction industry. Watch our safety video to learn about managing the risks of falls during a solar installation.

Work safely at heights on ladders



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/flrzZ16nDzg>

Safe use of ladders

Ladders

Workers have suffered dislocations, broken bones, severe lacerations and head injuries and in some cases workers have died.



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/dxjkE4jHwic>

Flatbed trucks

An experienced truck driver died when he fell from a trailer when loading.



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/XP1yIXHfswc>

Voids in house construction

Voids

An experienced worker suffered a serious brain injury when he fell through a stair void on a house construction site. The 60 year old worker was on the first floor helping move some materials when he tripped and fell through the void hitting the ground from three meters he suffered multiple fractures and a serious brain injury and hasn't worked since.



Watch Video At: https://youtu.be/_8op4h9Wh5w

How to safely use an elevated work platform when harvesting

Harvesting at heights

A 55 year old farm worker was picking avocados on a farm in rural NSW when the mobile elevated work platform he was working on overturned. He suffered severe injuries and later died as a result of these injuries.

Watch our video to learn how to manage the risks involved when harvesting at heights.

Posters and guidance

- [Falls from heights construction poster](#)
 - [Falls from heights construction poster \(Arabic\)](#)
 - [Falls from heights construction poster \(Chinese simplified\)](#)
- [Pocket guide to construction safety](#)
- [Construction falls from heights safety checklist](#) for principle contractors and site supervisors
- For practical information about working on the ground or from a solid construction, fall prevention devices, work positioning systems, fall arrest systems, ladders, administrative controls, emergency procedures, and the design of plant and structures, see the [Code of practice for managing the risk of falls at workplaces](#).
- For specific guidance for housing construction, see the [Code of practice for managing the risk of falls in housing construction](#).

Useful reports

- [Construction blitz on working at heights - 2019 report](#)
- [Construction blitz on working at heights - 2020 report](#)

Legal obligations

There are specific laws about working safely at heights: See [clauses 78 – 80 of the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017](#).

There are also [general work health and safety laws](#) that will apply to you in any situation, including when working at heights.

Search by keyword or industry



<https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/hazards-a-z/working-at-heights>

Except where otherwise noted, content on this site is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this licence, visit: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> 12-04-22