

# Stanwick Parish Council

## Working at Heights Policy

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### 1 SETTING THE POLICY STATUS

This is the Council's corporate policy and guidance on work at height. It sets minimum standards that **all** stakeholders must meet. This includes:

- Councillors
- Employees
- Volunteers

### 2 DEMONSTRATING COMMITMENT

2.1 The Council is committed to protecting its employees' health, safety and well-being. We believe that the best way to do this is through a proactive health and safety management system based on risk assessment. This includes ensuring employees are not put at risk, so far as is reasonably practicable, by work at height.

### 3 ASSURING MINIMUM STANDARDS

3.1 We will base our approach to controlling the risks from work at height on the requirements of current law and the latest guidance from the Health and Safety Executive, HSE. This means that arrangements for work at height must make sure:

- all work at height is properly planned and organised
- those involved in work at height are trained and competent
- the risks from work at height are assessed, and appropriate work equipment is selected and used
- the risks from fragile surfaces are properly controlled, and
- equipment for work at height is properly inspected and maintained.

#### **What is work at height?**

3.2 This is work in any place from which a person could fall a distance that could cause personal injury. It includes:

- access and egress, such as climbing a ladder to get to a higher point
- work on a flat roof or from a ladder
- working at ground level near to an open excavation
- work near to fragile materials, such as roof lights.

It doesn't include:

- walking up and down permanent stairs in a building.
- working in the upper floors of a building
- an operator sitting in the seat of a vehicle
- sitting in a chair

- slips and trips on the level
- caving or climbing involved in sport and recreation activities.

### **Overriding principle**

3.3 We must do all that is reasonably practicable to prevent anyone falling. We must avoid work at height where we can, for example, by using extendable cleaning poles to clean windows from the ground rather than using ladders.

3.4 If work at height cannot be avoided, then a risk assessment must be carried out for all such activities. You don't have to do a work at height risk assessment for tasks that pose a very low or trivial risk, such as using a kick stool to access shelves in an office. However, these activities must be included in your general risk assessment. The Council will make sure equipment is well maintained, and that employees are given appropriate training to make sure that they don't overload or overreach.

3.5 Examples of what to consider in work at height risk assessment include the:

- work activity
- equipment to be used
- duration of the work
- location where the work is to take place, as there could be hazards, such as overhead power lines, open excavations, underground services or microwave transmitters
- working conditions, such as weather conditions and lighting
- condition and stability of existing work surfaces
- physical capabilities of those carrying out the work, for example, vertigo sufferers.

This is also linked to whether they will be working alone, as they need to be medically fit and capable of doing this.

### **Planning and supervision**

3.6 Any work at height needs to be planned and organised in advance of the activity. You must:

- make sure that no task is done at height, if it is safe and reasonably practicable to do it without working at height
- take account of your risk assessment for the activity
- make sure that the work is:
  - properly planned, including the selection of equipment,
  - carried out in as safe a way as is reasonably practicable, and
  - appropriately supervised. For example, the use of fall arrest equipment will require a higher level of supervision
- plan for emergencies and rescue. For example, if a person falls while using a fall arrest system, how will they be rescued?
- take account of the weather conditions. You must postpone tasks if weather conditions endanger health and safety. This could be due to high winds or where low temperatures or rain make surfaces slippery.

3.7 If the activity isn't high risk and occurs regularly, think about developing a standard safe system of work or procedure, rather than creating a formal plan each time the task is carried out.

## **Competence, training and volunteers**

3.8 The Council will make sure that everyone involved in the work is competent. This includes volunteers, as well as employees. Anyone being trained should be supervised by a competent person. There is no definition of ‘competent’ in the regulations. However, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 define competence in this way...

‘A person shall be regarded as competent where they have sufficient training and experience or knowledge and other qualities to enable them properly to assist their employer in undertaking the measures they need to take to comply with the requirements of the relevant statutory provisions’.

This means a competent person would generally be expected to have had the right level of formal training, experience and instruction for them to be able to do their job to the level of responsibility required.

3.9 Competence in these regulations doesn’t necessarily just mean particular formal qualifications or skills. Someone can be competent if they have:

- an awareness of current best practice
- sufficient training and experience in work at height
- an awareness of the limitations of their knowledge
- a willingness to get help and advice when it’s needed.

3.10 The Council will also check the competence of everyone involved in:

- organising and planning the work
- supervising it, or
- supplying and maintaining equipment.

3.11 Where other precautions don’t entirely eliminate the risk of a fall occurring, the Council will, so far as is reasonably practicable, train those employees who will be working at height. The training must cover:

- how to avoid falling, and
- how to avoid or minimise injury to themselves should they fall

## **Volunteers**

3.12 A volunteer is anyone who does unpaid work for the Council. Employees can also be classed as volunteers if they do work activities other than their contracted duties.

3.13 The Council will not use volunteers for any tasks without checking that they’re competent to do them. The Council will apply the same principles to managing volunteers and protecting their well-being as they do for employees. The Council will make sure that suitable and sufficient written risk assessments are done to cover any activity involving volunteers before they begin work. We expect the person planning any work using volunteers to do these health and safety checks and risk assessments.

## Hierarchy of control

3.14 A simple hierarchy for managing the risks and selecting equipment for work at height is given in the Work at Height Regulations 2005. This is...

- Avoid work at height where you can  
Is it reasonably practicable to do the work safely from the ground?
- Prevent falls  
Use work equipment or other measures to prevent falls, where you cannot avoid working at height.
- Minimise injuries  
Where you cannot eliminate the risk of a fall, use work equipment or other measures to minimise the distance and consequences should one happen.

All parties must follow this systematically. You can only consider the next level when you've checked that the previous one isn't reasonably practicable.

3.15 This hierarchy is the key part of the risk assessment process, and will help you decide what is reasonably practicable for the task. It doesn't specify the equipment needed; it's up to you to decide.

## Selecting the right equipment

3.16 You must also consider how other factors of the work might affect the equipment selection. Think about...

- The working conditions...
  - What are the ground conditions where the work is to be carried out, or the equipment is to be erected?
  - Are there likely to be space constraints?
  - Are other people working in the same area?
- Is it a public area?
- The duration and frequency of use of the equipment or the task...
  - Is the work activity of short duration?
  - Is it repetitive?
  - How often does the task need to be carried out?
  - How long will the equipment be used on each occasion?
- The distance and likely consequences of any fall...
  - Can a fall occur?
  - If so, does it have the potential to cause injury?
  - How far might a person fall and what will they fall onto?
  - What are the likely consequences?
- The ease of rescue or evacuation...
  - Given the equipment, what arrangements are in place should a rescue or evacuation be required?
  - Can this be done easily?
- Access and egress...
  - What is the distance to be travelled getting to and from the point of work?
- The relative risks of installing, using and removing the selected work equipment...
  - Given the task and the available equipment, would the risks be reduced if one form of equipment was selected over another?

- The dimensions of the work equipment to make sure that there is a safe working area and safe passage.
- The appropriateness of the equipment for the task to be carried out.

## **Inspections and checks**

### **Checks**

3.17 Before every work at height task begins, the workplace must be checked by the employee carrying out the work. This could include visually checking:

- the surface the equipment will be placed on
- any existing edge or fall protection, such as a parapet or permanent guard rail
- the access equipment itself.

### **Inspections**

3.18 The Work at Height Regulations define inspection as

‘such visual or more rigorous inspection by a competent person, as is appropriate for safety purposes, including any testing appropriate for those purposes’.

This is a more formal process than doing ‘checks’, which may be just a visual examination of equipment before it’s used.

### **Ladders and stepladders**

3.19 The regulations don’t ban the use of ladders and stepladders, but they do require that careful consideration is given to using them. This is because 25-30% of all falls from height involve ladders. You should think carefully before specifying ladder use, and consider whether other safer access equipment can be used, such as tower scaffolds, podium steps or temporary stairs.

3.20 You should only use a ladder if your risk assessment shows:

- the task is low risk, such as doing an inspection, cleaning a small window or changing a light bulb, and
- the work is of short duration. This means working from a ladder for no longer than 15-30 minutes at a time, depending upon the task being carried out. After this, the employee could stop work for a suitable break, then continue the task if necessary, or
- there are features on site, which cannot be changed, and mean that other more suitable equipment cannot be used safely or effectively.

3.21 When using a ladder, always:

- choose the right one for the task
- make sure it’s in good condition
- make sure the surface it rests on is suitable
- make sure it’s stable, secured where possible, and has effective anti-slip devices
- make sure that it’s long enough and positioned properly to allow good access to the work area. Don’t stretch or overreach while on a ladder.

3.22 Make sure work activities that involve carrying heavy loads are never done from a ladder. Always maintain three points of contact, both feet and a hand, when using a ladder. If you can't, then ladders and stepladders aren't the right equipment for the job, unless they have standing platforms.

3.23 Make sure ladders and stepladders are locked up when not in use to prevent unauthorised access.

3.24 The Health and Safety Executive's website gives further guidance on the use of ladders and stepladders. Go to [www.hse.gov.uk/falls/ladders/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/falls/ladders/index.htm).

## **OFFICERS**

4.1 Employees have responsibilities as well as rights. These include:

- reporting any hazards, risks or unsafe situations they identify at work
- being co-operative and proactive in all health and safety issues. This includes following safe working procedures and using control measures, such as equipment and any safety devices supplied to them, properly
- following any training and instructions given to them
- reporting any problems or shortcomings in the Council's health and safety arrangements. This includes any concerns they have about work at height
- telling the Council if you can't work safely at height because of health reasons. This is so we can make any adjustments needed to protect health and safety.