

HSP 67 Working at height

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1. Introduction

Falls from height are one of the biggest causes of workplace fatalities and major injuries in the UK. Common causes are falls from ladders and through fragile roofs. Whilst working at height should be avoided where possible there will be occasions when it is unavoidable. Where this is the case, arrangements must be put into place to minimise the risks of falling persons or items.

2. What the Regulations require

The Work at Height Regulations 2005 place duties on employers to ensure that any work carried out at height is done in a safe manner that prevents persons or equipment falling from height.

The selection of access equipment, such as ladders or mobile work platforms must be carefully considered and should be suitable for the task it is designed to be used for. Access equipment includes step stools, stepladders, leaning ladders, scaffold and specialist access equipment such as 'cherry pickers'.

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that Elizabeth Finn homes provides a safe working environment for any person who may enter the home by:

- Providing adequate training and instruction.
- Ensuring all potential hazards from working at height in the workplace are identified.
- Any risk to a person's health and safety is adequately controlled and reduced to the lowest level reasonably practicable.
- Where necessary the appropriate risk assessments and risk reduction plans are in place and followed.

3. Definition of Working at height

Working at height includes any place above or below ground level which "if a person fell they would be likely to suffer injury" (Health and Safety Executive (HSE), 2014).

At Elizabeth Finn homes you are generally working at height if you are using a vertical ladder or a step ladder. Activities include painting and decorating, changing lightbulbs, changing curtains, putting up Christmas decorations.



4. Working at height process

Before working at height, you must work through these simple steps:

- avoid work at height where it is reasonably practicable to do so;
- where work at height cannot be avoided, ensure the safest option is selected.
- minimise the distance and consequences of a fall, by using the right type of equipment. Low risk short duration tasks lasting no longer than 30 minutes to complete may be performed from a ladder or step ladder.
- Get a colleague to foot the ladder / step ladder.
- Working off the top three rungs and overreaching is not permitted.
- Inspections of ladders should be performed pre-use to identify any defects. Ladders should be marked with an Inspection tag and inspected every 12 months.

- Do not use the top ladder on a double vertical extension ladder.






5. Types of access equipment used within EFH

Vertical ladder 	Stepladder 	Loft ladder 
Kick step / stool 	Fixed steps 	Platform steps (Garden use) 

Foldable step stools are not recommended and should not be used.

Vertical ladders

Class 1 'industrial' or EN131 Commercial ladders or stepladders must be used within Elizabeth Finn homes. Class 3 ladders are designed for domestic use and are not suitable for work purposes.

Acceptable ladder marking – commercial	Not for commercial purposes – recommend replacement
 	
	

EN131 does not cover warehouse steps, loft ladders (EN14975) or step stools (EN14183) as they have their own classification.

Ladders or stepladders must be:

- A suitable size or length for the intended work so that over reaching is avoided.
- In good condition with no damage to any part of the ladder.
- Used on a firm flat surface
- Some stepladders have a top platform, this should only be used if the ladder has a handrail that extends above the height of the platform.

Kick step / stool

Kick steps do not have the same stability issues as a ladder and are designed not to move when weight is applied. Kick steps should be also be checked prior to use. Defective ones should be removed from service.

When in use you should stand in the centre, and make sure you are not overreaching.

6. Pre-use inspection

Prior to working at height, staff must: -

- Carry out a pre-use check of any equipment for visual damage or defects before use.
- Immediately take equipment out of use if it is damaged and report defects to their Manager.
- Use equipment appropriately.
- Report any accidents or Near Misses.

1. **Stiles** – ensure stiles are not bent /damaged this can cause the ladder to buckle or collapse
2. **Platform**- is it split, buckled etc. if so the ladder could become unstable or collapse
3. **Rung / steps** - if bent, worn, loose or missing the ladder could fall or collapse. Are they contaminated? This can make them slippery
4. **Feet** - Are they intact, missing or worn? If so it could cause the ladder to slip. Check all 4 feet are in contact with the ground and are level and are not contaminated before use.
5. **Locking Mechanism** – if bent or fixings are worn or damaged the ladder could collapse. Ensure the locking bars are engaged before using.



7. Annual ladder inspection

Ladders are formally examined annually by the homes Maintenance teams. An inspection tag is secured to the ladder. This task is detailed as task MTS 22 within the maintenance manual.

8. Scaffolding

Scaffold must only be assembled, dismantled or modified by competent persons who have received training in the type of scaffold to be installed. Less experienced scaffolders should be supervised. Scaffold must be braced and tied to a fixed structure and located on firm ground, avoiding grates and manhole covers.

Special attention should be given to ensure scaffolding does not impede access from a fire escape.

Once installed scaffolding must be inspected before first use, then at least every 7 days and following any situation that might have jeopardised the integrity of the scaffold, such as high winds. A record of these inspections must be recorded.

9. Training

The following teams have been identified as occasionally using step ladders in their work – Maintenance, Housekeeping and Social events.

These staff should complete Working at heights training available on Virtual College.

10. Associated documents

- RAG 63 Working at height – ladders
- <https://ladderassociation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/LA455-Safe-Use-of-Ladders-and-Stepladders-A-brief-guide.pdf>

11. A Summary of the main points

Check that:

- Where possible work at height is avoided.
- Staff complete working at height training.

11. Document history

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