

MAR'22 TOOLBOX TALK –

'Ladders & Safe Working at Height'

Contributor:

"Steps, or step ladders are one of the most used, and abused, pieces of equipment on a construction site. When abused and misused, they have enormous potential to cause accidents and injuries. Falling from a height is a major cause of fatalities in the construction industry. More than half of falls from a height of over 2 metres result in death or a life changing injury. Any fall from a height has the potential to cause serious life changing injuries.



Most falls that result in serious injuries are from a relatively short distance 2-3 metres. Fall prevention is much better than dealing with the consequences of a fall from height.

Remember it's not the fall, it's the sudden stop that causes the damage" (Michael Murphy head of Health and safety, Laois Scaffolding Hire Ltd.)

Contributor's Shared Advice:

- Plan and organise the work schedule
- Risk Assess all work at height, before attempting to start work
- Select the most appropriate access equipment
- Ladders are essentially a means of access/egress and should only be used as working platforms for very short duration tasks, where alternative platforms would be impracticable, and where such tasks can be carried out safely using a ladder
- Only professional ladders should be used,
- All ladders must be certified and should have a record of inspection
- All ladders should be in good condition
- Ladders must be suitable for the work being undertaken and suitably secured (preferably tied off at the top using both stiles to prevent both sideways slip and rotation)
- All operatives must be aware of the hazards and risks involved in the work they are undertaking
- Training in working at height equipment must be provided
- Always carry out visual check of working at height equipment prior to use. Report any defects immediately
- Consider weather conditions – wet, windy and/or icy conditions can have a serious impact on safety at height
- Beware of overhead obstructions, especially overhead power lines (metal ladders/metal reinforcements)

When using ladders:

- Always stand ladders on a firm base.
- Never use rungs as a support for planks, or rest rungs on planks
- Remove excessive mud, grease, etc, from footwear prior to climbing/descending a ladder
- Always use both hands to climb/descend, and face the ladder, 3 points of contact
- Do not carry loads up ladders – use hoists or alternatives
- Never overreach from ladders – get down and move them

Roof work:

- All roof work needs to be properly risk assessed before starting
- If roof work is involved identify any fragile areas and/or openings and implement suitable protective precautions
- Use crawling boards/roof ladders where applicable