Safety – Initiative

02 Working at Height

May 2011

CONTENTS

1. Objective of the initiative

To ensure that all employees and subcontractors are aware of the risks associated with working at height.

2. Overview.

Work at height means working at a height where a person could be injured when falling from it even if it is at or below ground level. Remember there is no 2 meter rule anymore.

Working at height may be a one off task or routine. In all cases managers and supervisors need to ensure that suitable control measures have been put in place so that work can be carried out safely.

Risk assessments must be completed for all tasks with the aim of eliminating the need to work at height wherever possible. Where this is not possible correct control measures which are adequate and suitable for the specific task must be selected and implemented.

Falls from height remain the single biggest killer among workplace accidents and are one of the main causes of major injury. The Work at Height Regulations 2005 were introduced to help prevent fatalities and serious injuries. Individuals must not become complacent or assume that these accidents occur at great height.

UK fall from heights statistics for 2007/2008

26% of fatalities were from a fall of less than 2 meters

77% major injuries were from a fall of less than 2 meters

90% of over 3 day lost time injuries were from a fall of less than 2 meters

Overall there were 45 fatalities and 3351 serious injuries resulting from falls from heights.

In 2008/2009 over 4000 major injuries were caused by falls from height at work. You may think that you are doing everything you can to prevent falls from height at work but everyone could do more.

3. Implementation

All sites are to promote this initiative through a toolbox talk and display on the site health and safety notice board.

4. Duties

The Regulations require all duty holders to ensure:

- All work at height is properly planned and organized.
- All work at height takes account of weather conditions that could endanger health and safety.
- Those involved in work at height are trained and competent.
- The place where work at height is carried out is safe.
- The equipment for work at height is appropriately inspected.
- The risks from fragile surfaces are properly controlled.
- The risks from falling objects are properly controlled.

5. Hierarchy of Controls

When planning work we must implement the hierarchy of control measures, we must:

- Avoid work at height where possible.
- Use work equipment or other measures to prevent falls where they cannot avoid working at height.
- Use Collective measures over personal protection.
- Where they cannot eliminate the risk of a fall, use work equipment or other measures to minimize the distance and consequences of a fall should one occur.

<u>Elimination</u>

Avoid working at height wherever possible. Can the risk be designed out? Can the task be carried out from ground level? GBM policy states 'work at height will not be undertaken where there are other reasonably practicable means of carrying out that work other than from height'.

<u>Prevention of Falls</u>

Where working at height cannot be eliminated there is the potential for a fall from height. All work areas shall be protected with guardrails and toe boards. Guardrails and toe boards must meet the following requirements:

They must be of suitable strength, be secured to a structure or support that is strong enough for the task, the guardrail shall be at a minimum height of 950mm above the edge, toe boards are to be at least 150 mm high and no gap between the guardrail and toe board should be greater than 470mm.

Where work is carried out on working platforms the platforms must meet the following requirements:

They must be placed on suitable and sufficient foundations, be stable (including being secured to any other structure), have no gaps which could allow any object to fall through and endanger those working below, be a minimum of
600 mm wide and permit the safe use and maintenance of equipment.

Minimize the Consequence

If the risk of falls cannot be avoided, measures must be put in place to minimize the consequence of a fall. Airbags, safety nets and fall arrest equipment are examples of equipment which can help minimize potential injury if used correctly, the users know how to use it, they are aware of its limitations and it is properly maintained.

All Method Statements and Risk Assessments should implement the hierarchy of controls and ensure that persons using any equipment or PPE are trained and competent, the equipment is regularly inspected (legislative requirements as minimum) and the work is controlled and supervised to ensure it is carried out safely.

6. Workplace Inspections

Any work platforms or personal suspension equipment provided in compliance with the Construction Design Management Regulations 2007 must be inspected:

- Before being used for the first time – obtain handover certificate from the erectors.
- After substantial addition, dismantling or other alteration.
- After any event likely to have affected its strength and stability.
- At regular intervals not exceeding 7 days since the last inspection.

7. Fragile Surfaces

No one should go near to or enter on to a fragile surface unless it is the only reasonably practicable way for the operative to carry out the work safely. All other methods of work should be investigated and given priority. Working on a fragile surface should be a last resort. If work on fragile surfaces cannot be avoided the following should be in place prior to entry:

- Suitable platforms, guardrails and coverings to minimize the risk of a fall.
- If there is still the risk of a fall, the effects should be minimized by the use of nets, airbags and fall arrest equipment.
- Make all persons aware of the fragile surface by displaying fixed notices on all approaches.

8. Ladders

Ladders should only be used for low risk, short duration tasks. Ladders are often used for tasks which could be carried out more safely and quicker by using other equipment such as mobile elevated working platforms, mobile towers or scaffolding. When ladders are used, you must be able to demonstrate that it was not reasonable to use any other suitable equipment due to the short duration or low risk nature of the work.

Where ladders are used you must ensure that it cannot slip and is secure; it should be tied at the top and be secured at the bottom (or have someone to hold the base). Ladders should be used on a firm and stable base and set at an angle of 75 degrees.

Ladders should be inspected on a regular basis and tagged; operatives should visually inspect ladders for defects before use.

9. Falls from Vehicles

More than 700 people each year are injured when falling from vehicles. The most common causes being slipping from the access points and unstable loads.

Working from the rear of vehicles should be avoided. In most cases the driver will offload the deliveries. The involvement of other operatives should be avoided where possible to eliminate risk. Risk assessments and method statements should identify control measures to ensure loading/off-loading is carried out safely.

10. Excavations/Openings

You can be working at height whilst working on ground level. An excavation or opening could be the cease of a fall from height. When working in or around excavations or openings ensure:

- There is safe access into the excavation, eg a sufficiently long, secured ladder?
- There are barriers or other protection to stop people and vehicles falling in?
- There are properly secured stop blocks provided to prevent tipping vehicles falling in?
- There is adequate signage to warn people of the risks.

Site Manager		Contract Name		Date	
Safety Initiative – 02 Working at Height				**issue 2**	**May 2011**

Name of Personnel	Signature	Company