

TOOLBOX TALK

BRIEFKIT

Working at Height

A ready-to-deliver toolbox talk for foremen and supervisors. 8-10 minute spoken script plus briefing register for operative sign-in.

REFERENCE	TBT-WORKING-AT-HEIGHT-001	DURATION	8-10 minutes
DATE		SITE	
TRAINER (PRINT)		SIGNATURE	

1 Why it matters

The Work at Height Regulations 2005 apply to anywhere a person could fall and injure themselves. That includes ladders, stepladders, the edge of a deck, the top of a piece of plant. Not just roofs and scaffolds. Around 25 to 30 construction workers a year are killed by falls from height in the UK. More than half are from ladders.

2 PPE required for this task

Hard hat (chinstrap on scaffold work)

Safety boots, steel or composite toe

Harness and lanyard where fall arrest is the only option

Hi-vis vest

Gloves rated for the task

3 Hierarchy of control for working at height

Always try the option above before moving down the list.

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4 What to say

Spoken script for the supervisor. Read or paraphrase, in order.

1 What counts as working at height

It's not just roofs and scaffolds. Any place you could fall and hurt yourself counts. A ladder. A stepladder. The edge of a deck. On top of a piece of plant. A chair you stood on for two seconds. The law treats it the same.

2 What we try first: the hierarchy

First choice is don't work at height at all. Can the job be done from the ground? Pre-assemble on the ground, lift the unit up, fit it without going up. If we can't avoid it, we work off something that prevents a fall. Proper scaffold, MEWP, fixed platform with guardrails. If we still can't do that, we minimise the fall. Netting, airbags. Last resort, arrest the fall. Harness and lanyard. The further down that list, the worse the option.

3 Before you go up

Inspect what you're going on. Scaffold tag in date? Ladder feet not cracked, stiles straight? MEWP basket gates closed and locked? Edge protection complete around the platform? If it's not right, it doesn't get used. Don't borrow from another trade's setup without checking it. They might have removed something and not told us.

4 The weather

Wind matters. If you can't hear me clearly across the scaffold, we're not working on it today. Rain on a steel deck or a clean tile is an ice rink. Cold gives you frozen fingers and slips. Hot weather, you're drinking water every 20 minutes whether you feel thirsty or not.

5 The rescue plan

If someone falls in a harness, suspension trauma can kill them in 15 minutes. We need a plan to get them down. Where's the MEWP. Who's calling 999. Who's getting them out. Not figured out when it happens. Figured out today, before anyone goes up.

6 The honest one: ladders

More than half of fatal falls in UK construction are from ladders. Not 30-foot scaffolds. Ladders. We treat ladders seriously. Right angle, tied off, three points of contact, hands free of materials. If it's a job that takes more than 30 minutes or any real exertion, it's not a ladder job.

5 Three points of contact on a ladder

Two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand, in contact at all times.

Three points of contact on a ladder

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CORRECT



Hands free, three points of contact maintained

WRONG



Carrying a load means hands aren't on the ladder

6 Common mistakes to call out

Climbing with both hands full (materials go up by gin wheel or rope hoist, not in your hands)

Untied scaffold ties because "we'll put them back later"

Toeboards missing on the working lift

Trusting a previous trade's edge protection without checking

Removing PPE because it's hot (that's exactly when you need the chinstrap)

Using a power tool while leaning out of a MEWP basket

Standing on the top rung of a stepladder

Working alone at height with no radio or phone

Harness clipped to the MEWP handrail instead of the proper anchor point

7 Watch on site this week

What the supervisor should be actively spotting on walk-arounds.

Anyone climbing while carrying tools or materials in their hands

Edge protection gaps after another trade has been through

Stepladders set up at the top of a flight of stairs (the bottom of the stairs is more than 2m below, so that step is a height risk)

Operatives in a MEWP without the gate closed

Harness lanyards clipped to anything that isn't a designated anchor

Ladder feet on a tarpaulin, loose plywood, or wet timber

Damaged or missing guardrails on the scaffold's working lift

Anyone climbing a scaffold via the standards instead of the internal ladder

8 Confirm the team understood

Ask one or two of these at the end of the talk.

1. What's the first thing on the hierarchy of control for work at height? (Avoid it.)
2. Where's the rescue plan kept and who's responsible if someone falls in a harness?
3. What wind speed stops work on the scaffold? (Check the RAMS, usually around 38 mph / Beaufort 8.)
4. Where's the nearest hospital A&E if someone's badly hurt?

Need site-specific RAMS for this work?

A toolbox talk is generic by design. It works on every site. Your RAMS isn't. Briefkit writes site-specific Risk Assessment & Method Statements for £30 per document. **briefkit.co.uk**

Briefing register: Working at Height

All operatives who attend this toolbox talk must sign below. Their signature confirms they have heard and understood the briefing.

Briefing delivered by:

Name (print):		Date:	
Signature:		Time:	
Site:			

Attendees. I confirm I have heard and understood the briefing detailed above:

#	Name (print)	Company / Role	Signature	Date	CSCS / Ticket No.
1					
2					
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Keep this register in the site Safety File. Additional sheets may be appended if more than 12 operatives are briefed.

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This is a generic toolbox talk for industry use. It is not site-specific. Site-specific risk assessments and method statements are a separate document.