



# Hazard Management Procedure

## Information Sheet: Prevention of falls

### Purpose

The following frequently asked questions will assist schools/branches manage hazards associated with work where there is the potential to be injured from a fall from one level to another, in accordance with the [Hazard Management Procedure](#) and the [Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 \(SA\)](#).

### Q1 Is there a height specification relating to legislative requirements to prevent falls?

No, there is no height specification. Fall hazards can be found where work is carried out at a height, for example working on a platform, but can also occur at a low height, for example whilst unloading a truck, and can also occur at ground level, for example into holes or pits.

The [Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 \(SA\)](#) [Chapter 4, Part 4] requires a hazard management approach to any task/activity which could result in a fall from one level to another, regardless of the height, where it is reasonably likely to cause injury to the person or any other person.

The legislation requires consideration of the work environment and any activity where a person could fall:

- from an elevated workplace
- in the vicinity of an opening
- in the vicinity of an edge
- through a surface
- from any other place.

It should be noted that where a task/activity relates to 'high risk' construction work (where the worker could potentially fall more than 3 metres, measured from foot level), a safe work method statement (SWMS) is required. If you are unsure if your task/activity fits within this definition, and for requirements relating to SWMS, refer to the [Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 \(SA\)](#) [Regulations 289, 291 and 299-303].

### Q2 What is required to manage the risk of falls under the WHS Regulations 2012 (SA)?

Chapter 4, Part 4 of the [Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 \(SA\)](#) requires:

1. Where it is reasonably practicable, the work be carried out on the ground or on a solid construction. Solid construction means an area that has:
  - a surface that is structurally capable of supporting all persons and things that may be located or placed on it
  - barriers around its perimeter and any openings to prevent a fall
  - an even and readily negotiable surface and gradient and
  - a safe means of entry and exit.
2. Where it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risk of a fall as outlined above, then the worker is to be provided with adequate protection through safe systems of work (listed in the required order of controls):
  - a fall prevention device (i.e. a secure fence, edge protection, working platforms and covers), or if this is not reasonably practicable,
  - a work positioning system (i.e. plant or structures, other than a temporary work platform, that enables a person to be positioned and safely supported for the duration of the work to be carried out), or if this is not reasonably practicable,
  - a fall arrest system (i.e. plant or material designed to arrest a fall such as an industrial safety net, a catch platform, a safety harness system).

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**Q2 What is required to manage the risk of falls under the WHS Regulations 2012 (SA)? (Continued)**

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A combination of controls may be required to minimise risks so far as is practicable if a single control is not sufficient. A safe system of work to prevent a fall from one level to another could include providing:

- temporary work platforms
- training in relation to the risks involved in work at the workplace, and
- safe work procedures, safe sequencing of work, safe use of ladders, permit systems and appropriate signs.

3. Emergency and rescue procedures

Where a fall arrest system is a control measure, emergency procedures must be established, including rescue procedures in relation to the use of the fall arrest system. These procedures must be tested so that they are effective and relevant workers must be provided with suitable and adequate information and instruction in relation to the emergency procedures.

4. High risk construction work (involving the risk of a person falling more than 3 metres)

Where construction work is carried out and there is the risk of a person falling more than 3 metres, a safe work method statement is to be prepared in accordance with [Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 \(SA\)](#) Regulation 299-303].

(Construction work means any work carried out in connection with the construction, alteration, conversion, fitting-out, commission, renovation, repair, maintenance, refurbishment, demolition, decommissioning or dismantling of a structure.)

**Q3 Are there any work activities where these requirements do not apply?**

In accordance with the [Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 \(SA\)](#) [Regulation 79(4)], these requirements are not applicable to:

- the performance of stunt work
- the performance of acrobatics
- a theatrical performance
- a sporting or athletic activity
- horse riding.

The risks in relation to these work activities are to be managed in accordance with the “General risk and workplace management” requirements outlined in [Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 \(SA\)](#) [Regulation 36] and the [Hazard Management](#) procedure i.e. apply the general principles of hazard management and the hierarchy of control.

**Q4 What hazards are associated with falls from one level to another, and what control measures could be used?**

Foreseeable hazards that require particular attention are those associated with an activity conducted:

- on any structure or plant being constructed or installed, demolished or dismantled, inspected, tested, repaired or cleaned
- on a fragile surface (e.g. cement sheeting roofs, rusty metal roofs, fibreglass sheeting roofs and skylights)
- on a potentially unstable surface (e.g. areas where there is potential for ground collapse, loose rocky slopes)
- using a portable or fixed ladder (e.g. where the working width and movement is limited, the working position is awkward requiring the need to stretch sideways, work above shoulder height or for a long duration, work at night or in a remote or isolated place, working from the top rungs/steps of the ladder)
- using a tripod ladder or ladder for orchard work (e.g. pruning, picking)
- at a height to collect samples for research purposes (e.g. bats, birds, ecology)
- outdoors on a sloping surface (e.g. ramp, hill, ground, and potential for very wet or windy conditions, work at night, a remote or isolated place)
- on a stairwell (internal or external)
- using equipment to work at the elevated level (e.g. when using elevating work platforms)
- on a sloping or slippery surface where it is difficult for people to maintain their balance (e.g. on glazed tiles, a wet surface)
- near an unprotected open edge (e.g. near incomplete stairwells)
- near a hole, shaft or pit into which a worker could fall (e.g. trenches, lift shafts or service pits).

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**Q4** What hazards are associated with falls from one level to another and what control measures could be used?  
**Cont'd** (Continued)

Hazards identified should be managed in accordance with the [Hazard Management](#) procedure.  
 Examples of control measures in accordance with the hierarchy of control are provided in **Table 1**.  
 Schools/branches will need to tailor appropriate control measures based on the nature and location of the activity.  
 This is also applicable to any off-campus and research activities.

**Table 1**

Hazard	Examples of control measures. (One or more measures may be appropriate under each heading and should be considered.)
<p><b>Falls from one level to another</b></p>	<p><b>Eliminate the hazard</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Work on the ground.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reduce shelving heights so that workers can access items from ground level.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use tools with extendable handles.</li> </ul> <p><b>If elimination is not possible – minimise the risk using the following options as applicable.</b></p> <p><b>Substitution</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use walkways for access instead of using ladders.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Install scaffolding or another type of work platform.</li> </ul> <p><b>Isolation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Install a physical barrier (e.g. secure fence, cover or other forms of safeguarding).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Install edge protection (e.g. guard railing which is between 900mm and 1100mm above the work surface, has mid rails, can withstand the impact of a person falling against them and toe boards which are secured and extend a min of 150mm above the platform surface).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Install vertical containment sheeting.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Install fall protection covers (i.e. covering holes and openings) which can support the impact of a person falling onto it.</li> </ul> <p><b>Engineering controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Construct a permanent safe working platform which is secured against a structure for stability and installed with an edge protection system. It should be non-slip, free from trip hazards and provide safe access and egress. Further information on fixed walkways, staircases and ladders is in <a href="#">AS 1657 (2018) Fixed Platforms, Walkways, Stairways and Ladders – Design, Construction and Installation</a> and for temporary platforms, refer to <a href="#">AS 1576 Scaffolding</a> and <a href="#">AS 4576 (2020) Guidelines for Scaffolding</a>.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide mechanical access i.e. elevated work platform e.g. boom type, scissor lifts and vertical mast. Their use should be guided by <a href="#">AS 2550.10 (2006) Cranes, Hoists and Winches – Safe Use, Mobile Elevating Work-Platforms</a>. Workers must wear a safety harness (see Personal Protective Equipment).                      Note – for boom type platforms, where the boom length is 11m or more, the operator must hold a high-risk work licence (see Q6).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Install a safety net or catch platform capable of taking the load (it must be installed as close as possible to the underside of the work area, but not in contact with the surface). The safety net must cover an area extending beyond the work area. It should only be used if it is not possible to install a physical barrier or use personal protection systems.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use order picking forklift trucks for handling of materials stored at height.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide a tool belt or side pouch or alternative method to ensure materials or tools are not carried while climbing a ladder.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Secure all items and erect barriers to prevent items from falling onto people below.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Install guard rails. Further information is in <a href="#">AS/NZS 4994 Temporary Edge Protection</a>.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Install temporary scaffolding (e.g. for painting, electrical work, building maintenance, construction or demolition work. Note – any scaffold from which a person could fall more than 4m must be erected by a certified scaffolder).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use a forklift work platform or industrial truck to elevate workers.                      (Note – the design and construction should be in accordance with <a href="#">AS 2359.1 (2019) Powered Industrial Trucks</a> and safe operating procedures are required. Further information on use is in <a href="#">AS 2359.2 (2013) Powered Industrial Trucks - Operations</a>. Forklift operators must be assessed as competent by a registered assessor and have a high-risk work licence (see Q6).</li> </ul>

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**Q4 What hazards are associated with falls from one level to another and what control measures could be used? (Continued)**

<p><b>Falls from one level to another</b> (Continued)</p>	<p><b>Administrative controls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct a risk assessment and document a safe work method statement (SWMS)/safe operating procedure (SOP) where required.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Identify workers who require specific training (e.g. training on a risk assessment and SOP (if applicable) and where a proficiency or high-risk work licence is required, record and monitor their training in accordance with the HSW Handbook <a href="#">Training Plan</a> and <a href="#">HSW Information, Instruction and Training</a> Procedures.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide adequate supervision.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide assistance (e.g. buddy system) if required (this includes where there is a risk of a fall in access areas or doorways if a secure barrier cannot be erected or the door locked shut until the activity is completed).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Select appropriate tools and equipment for the activity e.g. ladders, appliances which can be secured from falling if required. (Note – no ladder other than a trestle ladder may be used to support planks for a working platform and any such platform may only be used for light duty work).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The ladder is secured against displacement (i.e. slipping or sliding) and/or there is another person holding the base of the ladder.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure prestart checks are in place prior to the use of any equipment including personal protective equipment (PPE).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Advise workers of the reporting process if they identify any defects/problems with equipment.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Advise workers of the University’s <a href="#">online reporting process</a> for any incident/injury/hazard.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure the University’s contractor management system is followed (if applicable).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure safe systems of work have been considered if the worker is working in isolation and this has been included on the risk assessment/Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) including emergency and rescue procedures. This may include the provision of communication equipment (e.g. radio, mobile phone).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure maintenance systems are in place, including six-monthly checks of anchor points and personal protective equipment (e.g. harnesses, fall arrest devices).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure maintenance schedules are in place (where necessary) and that the equipment is fit for purpose and complies with the relevant Australian Standards prior to commencement.</li> </ul> <p><b>Personal protective equipment (PPE)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Safe harness or a pole safety belt attached to a secure structural support through the use of an adequate static-line system or attached to an appropriate anchorage.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use of a fall-arresting device connected to an anchorage point or static line to reduce the free fall distance. Note – before a fall-arresting device is used the work area must be inspected to ensure there are no obstructions in the potential fall path.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Travel restraint device (e.g. one that prevents a worker from reaching an unprotected edge by tethering them to an eyebolt or other suitable anchorage point). Further information on industrial rope access systems is available in <a href="#">AS/NZS 4488 Industrial Rope Access Systems</a>.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate footwear that minimises the risk of slipping (e.g. on wet surfaces).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Safety helmet that needs to be attached securely to the worker’s head to ensure it remains in place should the person be arrested by fall protection equipment during a fall.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Industrial rope access system (e.g. may be used for external window cleaning in multi-story buildings).</li> </ul> <p>Note - If using fall-arrest systems as a control measure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Workers must be properly trained and supervised in the use of the equipment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Workers should not work in isolation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The lanyard assembly should be as short as possible when used in conjunction with a fall-arrest system, to minimise the pendulum effect</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The fall-arrest anchorage point (fixed or travelling on static lines) should be located so that the lanyard can be attached before the user moves into a position where they can fall</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The components of a fall-arrest system must be compatible.</li> </ul> <p>Design, selection and use should be in accordance with <a href="#">AS/NZS 1891 Industrial Fall Arrest Systems and Devices</a>. A fall-arrest system must be installed by a certified person.</p>
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**Q5 Do I need approval to conduct work on a roof?**

Yes, if you require access to a roof (e.g. for a research project) or any other activity, you are required to contact [Infrastructure](#) for advice.

**Q6 Do I need a licence to operate items of plant e.g. elevating work platform, scaffolding, dogging or rigging work?**

Yes, you need to obtain a licence and you must be trained and assessed as competent by a SafeWork SA Registered Assessor.

Contact SafeWork SA on 1300 365 255 should you require any further information or refer to the [SafeWork SA High Risk Work Licence](#) webpage.

**Q7 Where can I find more information on fall protection?**

- [Hazard Management Procedure](#)
- [WHS Regulations 2012 \(SA\)](#)
- [Code of Practice for Managing the Risk of Falls at Workplaces \(June 2020\)](#)

If you require further information or advice, contact the [HSW Team](#).

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