

Work Involving a Risk of Falling Guideline

1.0 Introduction

USC is committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of all staff, students, visitors, volunteers and contractors when at USC and/or engaged in USC activities.

This includes any work done where a person or people (either working or in the vicinity of work) are exposed to a risk of injury from:

- falling from one height to another, or
- being hit by a falling object (associated with work at height)

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to provide resources that enable the prevention of injury from exposure to the risk of falling from one level to another and/or the risk of injury from being hit by falling objects resulting from work at height, in accordance with *Work Health and Safety (WHS) Regulations 2011* and the *Managing the risk of falls at workplaces: Code of Practice 2011*.

3.0 Scope

All workers, students, volunteers, visitors and contractors must comply with this guideline when undertaking work that may expose a worker, or any other person to a risk of a fall from one level to another or being hit by a falling object that is reasonable likely to cause injury.

4.0 Responsibilities

4.1 Executive of the University of the Sunshine Coast

The USC Executive has an overarching responsibility for ensuring the health and safety of workers, students, and other persons in USC workplaces or those that may be affected as a result of the undertaking of USC business.

4.2 Managers and Supervisors

Cost Centre Managers have a responsibility to know their statutory obligations regarding work being conducted in their area that may expose workers and others to a health and safety risk.

Cost Centre Managers are to:

- ensure that adequate resources (time, equipment, personnel) are allocated for the effective implementation of this guideline
- ensure this guideline is adhered to for relevant work undertaken in their area and/or work that they are responsible for (e.g. work that they contract that involves working at heights)
- ensure that all work that is reasonably likely to cause injury from the risk of falling from one level to another and/or from objects falling (from work at height) in their area, has a satisfactory risk assessment or safe work method statement
- provide supervision, information and training to manage risks encountered with working from heights
- monitor work practices in their area and maintain records

4.3 Human Resources

To advise and inform USC, on the development, implementation and delivery of this guideline.

4.4 Workers, students, volunteers and contractors

Understand and follow the requirements of this guideline.

5.0 Risk assessments for work involving a risk of falling

All work performed at USC where there is a risk of a person falling from one height to another or being hit by a falling object that is reasonably likely to cause injury will require a risk assessment.

The risk assessment process involves:

- identifying hazards
- assessing risks
- controlling the risks – selecting and implementing controls
- emergency procedures

- monitor and review

Risk assessments or safe work method statements for work at heights must be prepared in accordance with the requirements detailed in the *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011* and *Managing the risk of falls at workplaces: Code of Practice 2011*.

5.1 Identifying hazards

Identify locations and tasks that could cause an injury from a fall, or an injury of a person or people being hit by a falling object.

5.2 Assessing risks

When all of the hazards have been identified, the level of risk associated with each hazard must be ascertained. This involves determining the potential consequence of the risk, if it were to occur, and the likelihood of it happening. The combination of the consequence and likelihood determine the risk rating. The risk rating assists in ascertaining the actions that must be taken to control the risk and the priority of these actions. Refer to Risk management and risk assessment for health and safety for information on assessing health and safety risks.

5.3 Controlling the risks.

Ideally, risks should be controlled by eliminating them as far as is practicable. With respect to working at heights, this would mean eliminating the need to work at heights where ever possible. If any work can be done from the ground it should be, limiting the amount of working at heights. Where it is not possible to eliminate work at heights, the risks of working at heights should be minimised in accordance with the hierarchy of controls.

The Hierarchy of Controls

5.3.1 Elimination

Eliminate the need to perform work at heights. The *WHS Regulations* states that eliminating the need to work from heights **MUST** be considered e.g. through use of remote controlled equipment and performing work at ground level were possible.

If the hazard (and hence the risks) cannot be eliminated it must be reduced or minimised as far as is reasonably practicable by the following controls.

5.3.2 Substitution

Substitute the hazard for something less hazardous. The *WHS Regulations 2011* states that you **MUST** consider, if it is possible to do the work or part of the work on a solid construction to reduce the risks (e.g. substitute a ladder for an elevated work platform).

5.3.3 Engineering

This is usually implemented in the design stages, where an area is designed to reduced hazards. E.g. fixed roof access points; tool belt with tethers for tools, so that any tools used at heights are tethered to the worker and cannot fall and endanger people below; roof and scaffold guarding to prevent falls; installation of anchor points on roofs to secure fall restraints equipment or to anchor barriers to. Also includes the use or provision of fall prevention systems/devices; a work positioning system; provision of a fall arrest device.

5.3.4 Isolation

This involves separating the worker (or others) from the hazard (e.g. Exclusion zone – prevent people entering area where there is a risk of being hit by a falling object; barriers to prevent people getting near the falls risk area).

5.3.5 Administration

This refers to the implementation of policies, procedures, guidelines and training for people to follow. The also includes organising/managing work practices to reduce risks, e.g.:

- procedures and guidelines
- training people for working at heights
- safe systems of work
- plan to work when there is minimal traffic to reduce the risk to passers-by from falling objects

5.3.6 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Should only be used when the use of other controls have not sufficiently reduced the risk.

Note: Administrative and PPE controls do not directly reduce the hazard – they are referred to as ‘soft controls’ as the hazard is still there and you are relying on human behaviour to be adequate to control the risks. This is why these two controls should never be used in isolation of other (‘hard’) controls that are aimed at directly reducing the actual hazard.

5.4 Implementation of controls

Managing the risk of falls at workplaces: Code of Practice 2011 states that you must ensure that the control measures you implement remain effective, indicating the control effectiveness must be monitored.

To implement controls effectively you must also:

- develop work procedures that ensure that controls are used effectively, maintained and monitored
- develop appropriate training that ensures competency
- ensure that procedures and training are in accordance with manufacturer's instructions where applicable
- provide ongoing supervision where appropriate

Things to consider:

It is often most effective to use a combination of controls to reduce risk.

Work of longer duration and higher frequency will usually require higher order controls (the '*hard*' controls – elimination, substitution, engineering and isolation).

Controls measures selected should not create new hazards e.g. elevated platforms potentially bringing workers into contact with overhead electrical wires.

5.6 Monitor and review of process

It is paramount that all implemented controls are monitored and reviewed continuously to ensure:

- the risk assessment process has been effective in identifying all hazards
- that hazards are being effectively controlled
- that the implemented controls are not introducing more uncontrolled hazards
- that workers are working in accordance with the risk assessment and/or safe work method statement.