

Guidance

No Excuses Today for Not Taking Appropriate Actions to Tether Operative Tools at Height

Working at height is a dangerous business which needs to be taken seriously by all those involved. According to HSE statistics, falls from height are the single largest cause of workplace deaths in the UK - and falling tools aren't far behind in terms of causing serious injuries and even possible deaths. Therefore, it's just as important to make sure your tools are tethered as much as you make sure your workers are properly protected at height.

When it comes to worker safety there is absolutely no legitimate excuse for not taking appropriate action to tether your tools at height. Proper tool safety is relatively inexpensive, easy to do, and can be done without significant interruption to workplace production. Yet there continue to be those who violate the law and fail to secure their tools properly. The reasons for doing so range everywhere from not having the money to not having the time to claiming ignorance of the law.

Lack of Financial Resources

Companies that cite a lack of financial resources that ostensibly prevent them from purchasing the necessary tethering equipment are risking greater financial loss by doing so. First of all, dropped tools can easily break, thereby needing replacement. For the cost of one cordless drill for example, you could purchase dozens of lanyards that would have most likely prevented the accident that broke the drill. Additionally, tethering your hammers, screwdrivers, and all your other tools increases the chances that your annual tool-related expenditures will go down.

Beyond the cost of the tools, think about the financial consequences you might suffer if someone was to be hurt or killed by a falling tool that you failed to tether. You could be facing legal consequences that could entirely wipe out your business and leave you in debt for years to come. Is it worth facing the closure of your business just to save a few pounds on safety equipment? Hardly.

While existing businesses now trying to comply with the law may sometimes struggle to find the financial resources for safety equipment, new business owners' just getting started need to understand that tool safety is now a regular part of the cost of doing business. It should be included in your budget when determining how much money you'll need to fund the first several years of your business. And since safety laws are not likely to change, there is no point in putting off such expenditures until a later date. You should have all of your safety equipment in place before you begin your first job.

Too Busy / Not Enough Time

Another common reason for failing to tether tools at height is the idea that we are too busy and don't have the time to follow safety procedures. During the height of the construction boom this excuse is one of the more popular given by individuals who are caught not complying with the law. Workers trying to make the most of summer sunlight hours often cut corners as a means of picking up speed. But cutting such corners could end up giving you all the time in the world - in the form of a disabling injury or a lost job.

Admittedly it does take an extra few minutes in the morning to make sure everything is properly secured before beginning work. It also takes a few extra seconds to prepare a tool for use, or to transport it from

tool bag to tool bag. But skilled workers will eventually get used to these tasks and naturally find the most efficient ways to do them. Before long they will have overcome the obstacles presented by tool tethering and their productivity levels will return to normal. Truth be told, lack of time is a poor excuse for not tethering tools.

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Ignorance of the Law

With many campaigns by the HSE to inform all companies involved in work at height of the appropriate regulations, it's hard to believe that any businesses would still be ignorant of the law. Nonetheless, as a business owner is your responsibility to inquire regarding everything and anything the law requires of you. Ignorance of the law will be no defence if you ever end up in court because a worker is injured or killed. If you are unaware of exactly what the working at height regulations 2005 say the HSE and government bodies publishes information and makes it available to all UK residents free of charge.

In addition to knowing the law themselves, company owners should also be insistent on hiring site supervisors who are also well versed in the law. An industry recognised training company will also be able to assist in the knowledge base of your managers and operatives therefore allowing your company to achieve competency for all working at height activities. It doesn't do you any good to hire managers and trainers who don't know the law themselves.

You Will Be Punished If Caught

If you're a company owner, manager, or worker who routinely violates tool safety regulations be warned that one day you will be caught and you will be punished. A case in point is a roofing company in Nottingham recently (November 2011) discovered to have been working at height for nearly 3 weeks without using any safety equipment. All it took was one passer-by to notice the problem and report the employees. The company for whom they work was penalised at a cost of £14,000 plus legal expenses.

Even if you're in an environment where your work is kept fairly private, all it will take to get you in trouble is one dropped tool that causes an injury or property damage. At that point, you'll be facing even more serious trouble because your lack of tool safety resulted in an accident. Fines will be greater and the potential loss of your business will increase as well. Once again, is it really worth it?

Those within the UK government who have decided tethering tools is important for worker safety have only the best interests of workers in mind. Rest assured they are not trying to inhibit production or put undue stress on businesses. They are trying to reduce the likelihood of work-related accidents that injure, maim, and kill.

Be aware that companies and workers who fail to comply with the law are opening themselves up to problems even beyond the fines and potential injuries. They are also open themselves up to issues with their insurance companies, trouble in getting insurance in the future, a bad reputation which could prevent them from landing future contracts, and so on. All of these other things come into play because other businesses don't want to deal with you if you refuse to obey the law. At the end of the day it's far better for all of us to stop making excuses and simply work more safely by tethering our tools and following all safety regulations properly.

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