

# Guidance

## Appropriate at Height Safety for Tools and Equipment

When it comes to utility, energy, and oil and gas industry sectors, all work with a wide ranging applicational risks, worker safety and property loss are of paramount importance. When you add at height exposure to the equation, these considerations become much more important and difficult to manage.

This is due to the fact that at height work carries with it some inherent high risks that are not present in ground-level working environments. These inherent risks proportionally increase the potential of worker injury equipment damage and loss of tools. In order to reduce these risks there are government mandated regulations in place.

These regulations do not necessarily spell out the exact safety procedures and methods companies must specifically follow. Rather, they are more geared to establishing the objectives and framework that need to be met at work places that include height work. For example, the law does state that companies must do whatever it is reasonably practical in order to avoid tools and equipment from falling. How that's accomplished and controlled is largely left to the companies themselves.

## Safety Measures Must Be Appropriate

Although the law does not specifically spell out fulfilment and retrospect compliance, it does indicate that all efforts must be appropriate to the site and the scope of work being done. To ensure this is the case, all work places must be inspected by certified competent personnel who are familiar with the type of work being done, the tools being used, and the safety systems available to secure tools and equipment, suitability ensuring operational fit for purpose.

A safety supervisor may look at a worker's tool bag, for example, to make sure that the type of lanyards being used for individual tools is appropriate to their use. He may not approve the use of a short wire lanyard with a cordless drill that must be extended out high above the head, if he believes it's likely the worker will unhook the lanyard in order to get full extension.

In such a case the instead recommend a flexible elasticated, webbing lanyard that can be used without detachment, deemed to be more suitable to the scope of activity. Management should also check the tools themselves to make sure they are appropriate to the task and are appropriately tethered correctly.

If any tool poses a potential safety concern and could be substituted for something more appropriate, that will be required. Upon completion of the inspection, the supervisor should leave with the site management a list of equipment and tools that did not pass inspection, and should therefore quarantine items. It is the responsibility of the management to rectify and replace those individual items.

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## Worker Protection and Loss Prevention

There are two primary reasons for properly securing tools on the job site. The first reason is, quite obviously, the safety of workers and others who might be in the same general vicinity i.e. the drop zone. When you consider the fact that any hand tool can become a potentially deadly object when dropped at height, it's easy to see why securing such tools is necessary.

The last thing a company or worker wants is to have a dropped tool strike someone on the ground and injure or kill that person. Not only will there be personal consequences for the worker who dropped the tool, but there will also be serious financial consequences for the company and the knock on affect through the corporate structure.

The second reason for securing tools at height is to prevent damage to those tools and other localised equipment. For example, a cordless power saw dropped from a height of two stories could very easily be damaged beyond use. Replacing tools of this nature and time lost comes with a high price that eats into a company's operating expenses. Since lanyards and tethers can be purchased at a fraction of the cost, there simply is no reason to fail to secure tools at height.

By preventing dropped tools from falling to the ground, businesses will realise less property loss expenses. Consultation with a recognised tool safety manufacturer should be asked to advise suitable means of securing and tool attachment for heavy objects.

## Proper Training Is Key

No matter how secure a safety system is, it is only as good as the training of the workers using it. To ensure maximum worker safety and loss prevention, companies should thoroughly train employees in all aspects of tool safety and security. It is helpful to continue ongoing education on a regular basis in order to keep safety and security at the forefront of worker's minds.

When a worker is properly trained and competent in safety procedures to the extent that it becomes habitual, he is much more likely to secure his tools properly and conduct himself appropriately. Proper training is especially important in companies with a high employee turnover.

Sometimes such companies find themselves so overwhelmed in trying to keep up with work that they fail to properly train new employees who come on board. While this is understandable, it is very unwise. All new employees should undergo a specified amount of safety training before even being allowed on the job site.

Furthermore, you can help new employees by designated a veteran worker to personally assist them in making sure safety procedures are being followed.

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## Taking Shortcuts

While taking shortcuts might be a common way for companies to keep their costs down it's not a good practice where safety is concerned. Taking shortcuts in the area of tool security and safety can result in workplace accidents. If injuries or deaths result from those accidents the penalties imposed upon the business will in all likelihood be far more costly than simply providing appropriate safety equipment.

To that end, remember that you get what you pay for. When considering appropriate safety equipment for securing tools at height you should always strive for only the best quality, whilst being suitably fit for operational and environmental purpose. Look for equipment manufactured in the UK, and certified according to UK and European height safety testing regulations, so that you know for sure you're getting quality specific equipment.

Also, pay attention to the materials used, design, and system compatibility of each piece of safety equipment. The fact is some designs are better than others. You are looking for equipment that can withstand the punishment of your particular type of work while still enabling your workers to do their tasks safely and efficiently.

In conclusion - As a general rule we would advise that products are procured from a recognised specialist working at height equipment manufacturers, ensuring provision is made for dynamic testing in-line with European PPE directive 89/686/EC, and so ensuring you employees receive safe appropriately tested safety equipment.

Lastly, never take shortcuts when it comes to planning and controlling your job sites and handling inspections. These critical points will ensure continues job and site safety. Poor planning and inefficient inspections only increase the likelihood of accidents - and when accidents increase, so do injuries and property loss.

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