

Guidance

Supervising Work Activity Involving Tools At Height

As a business owner or site supervisor, do you take the need to ensure safety for your workers and clients seriously? If not, this is something that needs to change immediately. This is especially true if your work involves working at height applications; even more so if those applications involve hand tools. Not only do you have a legal requirement to ensure the safety of everyone on and around your job site, you have an ethical one as well.

UK law provides that all operators working at height take every step possible to prevent falling tools. That's because falling tools account for thousands of injuries every year sustained by people standing on the ground. Many of these injuries are serious to the point of even being life-threatening. Therefore, supervising work activity involving tools at height is of paramount importance. Don't underestimate how important this is.

Advanced Site Inspections

Those who work at height know that law requires them to carry out safety risk assessments before beginning preparations for a job. As part of those assessments job site supervisors should also develop guidelines defining how tools will be secured. Those guidelines should be submitted along with the assessment to ensure that they are taken seriously. Afterwards, job site supervisors should then begin the process of assembling all the necessary equipment to make sure tools can be secured properly.

When a job site is finely set up, supervising work activity involving tools at height means checking each and every tool before a worker is allowed to put it in play. Tools should be checked to make sure they are appropriate for the job, lanyards should be checked for their integrity, and the entire system should be checked to make sure tools are secured in a way that makes them as safe as humanly possible. The failure to perform such a job site checks is a recipe for disaster.

Periodic Monitoring

Being a job site supervisor means making periodic rounds across the site to monitor worker activity. Supervisors should be watching to see how tools are used, how they are transferred from one location to another, and even how they are retired from service. As long as workers are following established protocols for tool safety the job site supervisor has nothing to worry about. But he or she will never know without periodic monitoring.

Along the same lines, periodic monitoring should also include regular inspections by off-site personnel. The law may require only annual inspections for long-term job sites, but you can never go wrong throwing in extra inspections every 4 to 6 months. Site inspections keep everyone on their toes while helping to maintain a safe environment. They should include the same criteria as the annual mandated inspections; things like the appropriateness of tools, proper use of safety systems, and so on.

Tracking of Tools and Safety Equipment

Part of any site supervisor's job is the tracking of tools and safety equipment. When working at height is part of the equation, this tracking becomes that much more important. Your initial site inspection should have resulted in two separate lists: a list of all tools and equipment that passed inspection and a second

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List of those that did not. Site supervisors should rectify all cases of unsafe tools and equipment and maintain paper records for future reference.

Tracking of tools and equipment is necessary in order to always have control over where tools are and how they're being used. If accurate records are not being kept there's no way to know for sure whether an unsafe situation has been rectified. There's also no way to be sure when a tool's safety system had been previously inspected or when it's due for another one. Job site supervisors, as much as many of them don't like it, need to be careful about maintaining the paperwork.

Proper Training of Workers

With some companies the individual job site supervisor is responsible for ensuring that his workers are properly trained. In other companies, training takes place off-site in environment made more conducive by a qualified training organisation. Regardless of the type of training your company engages in, it is ultimately the responsibility of the supervisor to make sure work is being done safely and properly. Therefore, it's essential for site supervisors to check on the credentials of any worker new to the site.

If a site supervisor observes a worker not following proper safety procedures it's incumbent upon him to find out why. If it turns out that the worker is not familiar with company safety practices, that individual needs to be trained accordingly. If the worker is fully aware but has chosen to ignore safety policies, appropriate disciplinary action must be taken. Job safety is too important to simply let go. Not paying attention to improperly trained workers can result in a serious accident.

Knowledge of Regulations

Proper job safety goes well beyond just the workers using tools at height. It also requires site supervisors and company owners to be intimately familiar with the regulations. It's just common sense that such individuals will be unable to make sure workers are safe if they themselves don't know what the law says. To that end, it is helpful to make sure site supervisors and other top management routinely review safety requirements.

When new regulations are introduced, or existing ones are modified, it is equally important for those involved to be kept up-to-date. That may mean ongoing training for site supervisors and other managers. While that can be a hassle at times it is necessary to protect the safety of workers and clients. If you think of it as one of the costs of doing business, ongoing training is much easier to stomach.

Supervising working at height activities is essential at all times. Making sure workers are practising proper safety, securing their tools, and following established safety guidelines will ensure a safe and productive workplace. At the end of the day, it is the site supervisor's responsibility to make sure this happens.

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