

Council uses WAIT to select access equipment for safe work at height

Falls from height remain one of the most common causes of workplace fatality. In 2009/2010, 39 people died and nearly 4200 major injuries were reported after a fall from height at work.

Following one such incident in 2009 involving one of their employees, Sheffield City Council was served with an Improvement Notice by HSE.

Sheffield was quick to respond. Working in partnership with HSE, the Council's Premises and Asset Management Team instigated a full audit and review of all ladders and stepladders kept on council premises, and developed a management system which enabled them to monitor and assess the risks that working at height posed to their workers.

Each piece of equipment was subject to a thorough examination to establish if it was safe to use and fit for purpose. A number of ladders and stepladders were discovered to be either defective or unsuitable and were subsequently de-commissioned and removed.

As a result of this audit, the Council were able to create an 'Access Equipment Inspection Record' – a database recording the type, location and condition of each piece of access equipment used by the council, and enabling their equipment to be proactively tracked and managed.

The Council also incorporated the use of the Work at Height Access and Information Toolkit (WAIT) into an initial risk assessment to be carried out before doing any work at height. The WAIT toolkit, developed by HSE, is a simple and user friendly online toolkit for people who occasionally work at height. It gives practical advice on the factors to consider when selecting access equipment and how to work at height safely as well as information on some of the different types of access equipment available.

The work at height management system has been well received, so much so that Sheffield intends to extend its use across all directorates within the Local Authority.

David Hempshall, Acting Head of Premises and Asset Management at Sheffield City Council, said: "We are committed to protecting the health and safety of our employees. The regular inspection of our access equipment and the use of WAIT when selecting the right equipment for work at height is an important part of that process."

Resources

-  [INDG401 The Work at Height Regulations](#)
-  [INDG402 Safe use of Ladders and Stepladders](#)
-  [INDG405 Top tips for ladder and stepladder safety](#)

More resources

- **Falls from height**
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