STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Working at Heights SOP

Document no.	SOP-CON-004
Revision	1.0
Owner	Site Safety Officer
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Review cycle	Every 12 months

1. Purpose

To prevent falls from height by requiring a documented hazard assessment, the right fall protection equipment, trained workers and a rescue plan before work begins.

2. Scope

Applies to all construction work performed at height, including roofs, scaffolds, ladders, elevated work platforms and leading edges, where a fall could cause injury.

Definitions

Fall protection	Any guardrail, harness and lanyard system, safety net or other control used to prevent or arrest a fall from height.
Anchor point	A structurally rated point that a lanyard or lifeline is connected to, capable of holding the forces of a fall.
Competent person (height)	A person trained to assess fall hazards, select fall protection systems and inspect related equipment.
Exclusion zone	The barricaded area below a height work location that is kept clear of people not involved in the task.

3. Responsibilities

Worker	Inspects and wears assigned fall protection equipment correctly, stays tied off as required and reports damaged gear.
Competent Person (Height)	Assesses fall hazards, selects the fall protection system, confirms anchor points and approves the rescue plan.
Site Supervisor	Sets up and maintains the exclusion zone below the work area and confirms the permit or task authorization is in place.
Safety Officer	Audits fall protection equipment condition, training records and compliance with the rescue plan.

RACI matrix

Activity	Worker	Competent Person (Height)	Site Supervisor	Safety Officer
Assess the fall hazard and controls	I	R/A	C	C

Activity	Worker	Competent Person (Height)	Site Supervisor	Safety Officer
Inspect harness and lanyard before use	R	A	I	I
Set up exclusion zone below the work	I	C	R/A	I
Approve the rescue plan	I	R/A	C	C
Remove damaged equipment from service	R	A	I	R

R = Responsible, A = Accountable, C = Consulted, I = Informed

4. Materials and PPE

Materials, tools and systems

- Full body harness and shock-absorbing lanyard
- Anchor point or lifeline system
- Guardrails or edge protection where used instead of harnesses
- Ladders, scaffolds or elevated work platform as required for the task
- Barricades and warning signage for the exclusion zone
- Equipment inspection log
- Rescue plan and rescue equipment

Personal protective equipment

- Hard hat with chin strap
- Full body harness
- Non-slip footwear
- High-visibility vest

5. Procedure

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.1	**Assess the fall hazard** The competent person assesses the task and location, and applies the hierarchy of controls: eliminate the need to work at height where possible, then prevent falls with guardrails, then minimize fall distance with a harness system.	Competent Person (Height)	☐
5.2	**Confirm the permit or task authorization** Confirm any required permit or task authorization for the height work is issued and posted, listing the approved fall protection system and duration of the work.	Site Supervisor	☐
5.3	**Select the fall protection system** Choose guardrails, a personal fall arrest system, or another control appropriate to the task, and confirm rated anchor points are available for the planned work area.	Competent Person (Height)	☐
5.4	**Inspect harness and lanyard** Before each use, inspect the harness webbing, stitching, buckles and D-rings, and the lanyard's shock absorber and connectors, for cuts, fraying, burns or corrosion. **Checkpoint:** Any harness or lanyard showing damage is tagged out and removed from service immediately.	Worker	☐

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.5	**Inspect ladders, scaffolds or platforms** Check the specific access equipment being used, such as ladder feet and rails, scaffold tags, or the platform's controls and guardrails, before it is used that shift.	Worker	☐
5.6	**Set up the exclusion zone below** Barricade and sign the area directly below the height work location to keep people clear of falling tools or materials while work is in progress.	Site Supervisor	☐
5.7	**Don and fit the harness** Put on the harness following the manufacturer's instructions, adjust all straps snugly, and have a coworker check the fit and buckle connections before climbing.	Worker	☐
5.8	**Connect to a rated anchor point** Connect the lanyard to an anchor point rated for fall arrest before moving past the edge protection or onto an unguarded surface, keeping the connection short enough to limit fall distance. **Warning:** Never connect to ductwork, guardrails not designed as anchors, or any unrated point.	Worker	☐
5.9	**Work with continuous tie-off** Stay connected to a rated anchor point at all times while exposed to a fall hazard, moving the connection point in a controlled way when repositioning. **Checkpoint:** The worker is tied off to a rated anchor point for the entire time they are exposed to a fall hazard.	Worker	☐
5.10	**Confirm the rescue plan is ready** Before work starts, confirm a rescue plan and the people and equipment to carry it out are in place in case a worker falls and is left suspended in a harness. **Warning:** Prolonged suspension in a harness can be dangerous. A rescue must be ready before anyone connects to fall arrest equipment.	Competent Person (Height)	☐
5.11	**Remove and store equipment after use** At the end of the task, disconnect and inspect the harness and lanyard again, and store fall protection equipment away from sunlight, chemicals and sharp edges.	Worker	☐
5.12	**Report damaged equipment** Report any fall protection equipment involved in a fall or found damaged to the safety officer immediately, and remove it from service until inspected.	Safety Officer	☐

6. Quality checks

- Every height task has a documented hazard assessment naming the fall protection system used.
- Harnesses and lanyards show a current inspection tag with no visible damage.
- A rescue plan is documented and understood by the crew before work at height begins.
- Exclusion zones below active height work are barricaded for the full duration of the task.

7. Records

- Fall protection hazard assessment
- Harness and lanyard inspection log
- Height work permit or task authorization
- Rescue plan

8. KPIs

- Percentage of height tasks with a completed hazard assessment on file
- Number of fall protection items removed from service after inspection
- Falls or near-miss falls per year

9. Common mistakes

- Connecting a lanyard to an unrated anchor point such as a guardrail or pipe.
- Skipping the pre-use harness inspection because it was inspected last week.
- Working at height without a rescue plan in case of a fall.
- Leaving the exclusion zone unmarked below active overhead work.

10. Revision history

Revision	Date	Description	Reviewed by
1.0	September 15, 2026	Initial release	Ilia Pirozhenko

Approval

Prepared by	Approved by	Date

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