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# INTRODUCTION

This training course is based on the unit of competency RIIWHS204E Work safely at heights.

The materials in this course provide the information you need to undertake safe working practices at heights or depths. They cover:

- ▶ Identifying the work requirements, procedures and instructions for the task.
- ▶ Accessing and installing equipment.
- ▶ Performing work at heights.
- ▶ Cleaning up the work area.

This unit applies to operational roles on worksites within:

- ▶ Civil construction.
- ▶ Coal mining.
- ▶ Drilling.
- ▶ Extractive industries.
- ▶ Metalliferous mining.

## 1.1 WORKING AT HEIGHTS

Working at heights includes any situation where a worker, or other nearby person, is exposed to a risk of falling (from one level to another) that is likely to cause injury to the worker or person.

Generally, this includes:

- ▶ Work conducted in or on plant or a structure that is at an elevated level.
- ▶ Work conducted in or on plant that is being used to gain access to an elevated level.
- ▶ Work conducted near an opening through which a person could fall.
- ▶ Work conducted near an edge over which a person could fall.
- ▶ Work conducted on or near a surface through which a person could fall.
- ▶ Work conducted on or near a slippery, sloping or unstable surface.

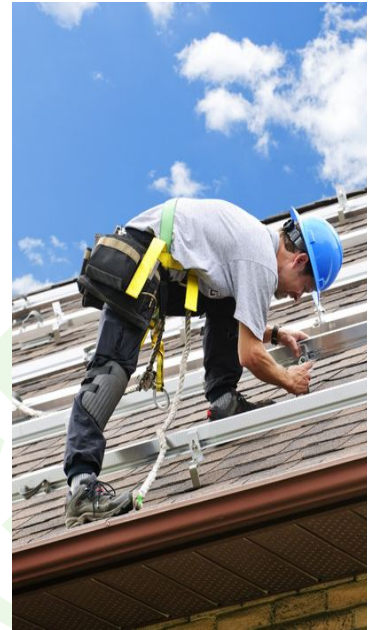
### 1.1.1 HOW CAN WE WORK SAFELY AT HEIGHTS?

Working at heights is by nature a hazardous practice. The risk of injury or death to either workers or other people in the area is a serious concern.

Every year people are injured and killed when they fall from a height or are hit by equipment or materials falling on them from above.

In order to work safely at heights, you must make sure you have properly planned the work to be completed. Therefore, we can conduct work at heights safely by:

1. Planning the work.
2. Identifying hazards/risks.
3. Assess the risks
4. Implementing hazard/risk controls.
5. Working in accordance with:
  - ▶ Procedures (site and equipment).
  - ▶ Regulations.
  - ▶ Codes of practice/ Compliance Codes and Guidance Material
  - ▶ Australian Standards.



## 1.2 LEGISLATION- ACTS, REGULATIONS AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

Part of the process of planning for work at heights includes accessing, interpreting and applying the relevant compliance documentation.

### 1.2.1 WHAT IS COMPLIANCE DOCUMENTATION?



Compliance documentation is essential to all aspects of operations on every worksite.

From work instructions through to quality and environmental requirements, compliance documentation sets out what, when, how and who of everything that needs to be done in the safest, most effective way.

Interpretation of compliance documentation will allow you to make the right decisions for each situation or task.

Interpretation means understanding what is required of you and how you are expected to perform the tasks.

Applying documentation involves following all instructions given by these documents at all times – they are designed to keep you safe.

Statements containing the words “must”, “shall” or “will” are often used within these documents to indicate that there are mandatory (legally must be applied) requirements.

Each project site will have different compliance documentation that must be referred to. This may include:

- ▶ Legislative, organisation and site requirements and procedures.
- ▶ Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)/ Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) legislation, codes of practice / compliance codes and guidance material.
- ▶ Manufacturer’s guidelines and specifications.
- ▶ Australian Standards.
- ▶ Codes of Practice and Compliance Codes
- ▶ Employment and workplace relations legislation.
- ▶ Equal Employment Opportunity and Disability Discrimination legislation.
- ▶ Licence and certification requirements.
- ▶ Internal permit control systems.
- ▶ Mechanical and electrical isolation processes.
- ▶ Company policy and permit control systems.



Compliance documentation may be provided by:

- ▶ OHS/WHS authorities such as Safe Work Australia and WorkSafe
- ▶ Environment Protection Authority (EPA).

## 1.2.2 OHS/WHS LEGISLATION

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)/Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) Acts and Regulations are law that must be adhered to, they are legally binding. Codes of Practice, Compliance Codes and Australian Standards give us practical guidance on how to meet the requirements set down by the law.

### Legislative Framework

Acts	Acts are laws; they are used to protect the health, safety and welfare of people at work. For example, the Work Health and Safety Act (the WHS Act) 2011, Victorian OH&S Act 2004
Regulations	More details or information on parts of the Act. Regulations are also the law.
Codes of Practice / Compliance Codes and Guidance Material	Practical instructions on how to meet the requirements of the law. For example, the Code of Practice 'Managing the Risk of Falls in Workplaces'.
Australian Standards	The minimum requirement a product is built to or a serviced delivered.

The legislation also outlines requirements for:

- ▶ The reporting requirements for notifiable incidents.
- ▶ Licences, permits and registrations (e.g. for persons engaged in high risk work or users of certain plant or substances).
- ▶ Provision for worker consultation, participation and representation at the workplace.
- ▶ Provision for the resolution of health and safety issues.
- ▶ Protection against discrimination.



Many specific details relating to WHS will be negotiated within the workplace in accordance with the legislation.

It is important that you speak with your Health and Safety Representative or Supervisor for more information on how these elements will affect your day-to-day operations, or if you have any concerns relating to health and safety.

See Appendix 1A for a list of terms and definitions relating to WHS.

## 1.2.3 CODES OF PRACTICE, COMPLIANCE CODES AND AUSTRALIAN STANDARDS

**Codes of Practice and Compliance Codes** define and provide guidance to organisations where activities containing elements of risk are encountered.

Codes of Practice and Compliance Codes also provide consistency across the industry or industries so that organisations are referencing the same materials to maintain their compliance requirements.

For working at heights, the main Codes of Practice to be familiar with are:

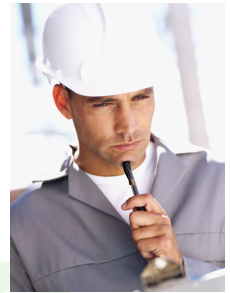
Victoria	<b>Prevention of falls in general construction 2019" &amp; Prevention of falls in housing construction- 2019</b>
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## 1.2.4 ORGANISATIONAL AND SITE REQUIREMENTS

All work at heights needs to be conducted in accordance with organisational and site requirements and procedures.

Procedures exist to ensure all work is completed in a way that is safe and achieves the required outcomes efficiently without causing harm to workers, equipment, work area or the environment.

During your site induction you will be told where to find the compliance documentation relevant to your site and duties.



### 1.2.4.1 Safe Work Method Statements



Many worksites require Safe Work Method Statements (SWMS) to be completed before any high-risk work can begin.

They detail the steps required to carry out a task as well as how specific hazards and risks related to a task will be managed. They are developed by the employer/PCBU for their employees/workers. Employees and workers should be consulted during the construction of the SWMS.

SWMS may also be referred to as Safe Work Procedures (SWP), Safe Operating Procedures (SOP) or a Job Safety Analysis (JSA).

They fulfil a number of objectives:

- ▶ They outline a safe method of work for a specific job.
- ▶ Workers must read and understand before commencing work.
- ▶ They assist in meeting legal responsibilities for the risk management process, hazard identification, risk assessment and risk control (using the hierarchy of control).
- ▶ They assist in effectively coordinating the work, the materials required, the time required and the people involved to achieve a safe and efficient outcome.
- ▶ They are a quality assurance tool.

## 1.2.5 MANUFACTURERS' GUIDELINES AND SPECIFICATIONS

These requirements will be documented in operator's manuals, equipment specifications and work instructions.

Designers and manufacturers have a responsibility to ensure structures, plant and equipment meets strict criteria for the safe operation and protection of workers while also meeting relevant environmental standards.

Recent cases have occurred where designers and manufacturers have been prosecuted for not adequately catering for health and safety or environmental requirements.

Where design faults or obvious environmental risks are present in equipment or in the deliberate use of such equipment, the manufacturer and the employer/PCBU can be held liable for any incidents that may arise.

## 1.2.6 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS

When carrying out any work at heights, you should always aim to reduce environmental risk and waste.

To do this you need to:

- ▶ Identify the environmental management plans, requirements and constraints.
- ▶ Confirm any aspect of the environmental protection requirements that may be unclear.
- ▶ Apply and comply with the project environmental protection requirements of all tasks undertaken in and around the worksite.



Some environmental requirements are:

- ▶ Organisational/project environmental management plans – These outline the steps and processes required to prevent or minimise harm to the environment due to work operations.
- ▶ Waste/clean-up management – This covers the disposal of site waste materials and rubbish as well as the recycling and re-use of waste materials.
- ▶ Water quality protection – This can include methods for directing run-off away from the stormwater system or other waterways. Spillage of chemicals or other materials and the use of spill kits are included.
- ▶ Noise, vibration and dust management – These plans aim to limit or avoid creating noise pollution and vibration for people in and around the worksite. Dust management includes the use of screens, tarpaulins and other dust suppression methods.

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) can investigate and fine individuals that do not meet the state and federal environmental protection arrangements that are in place. If you have concerns or questions about the exact requirements you must achieve, you should speak to your supervisor, the site environmental officer or contact the EPA for more information.

## 1.2.7 SPECIFIC OHS/WHS REQUIREMENTS FOR WORK AT HEIGHTS

Specific legislative and OHS/WHS requirements for your worksite may cover such areas as:

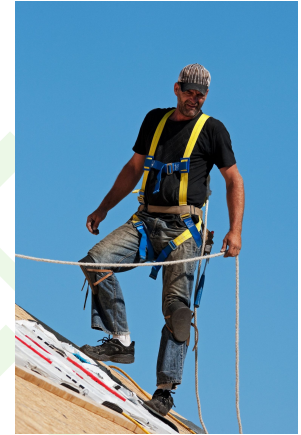
- ▶ **Emergency procedures**, including extinguishing fires (e.g. use of fire-fighting equipment), organisational first aid requirements (e.g. use of first aid equipment) and evacuation.
- ▶ **Rescue procedures**, especially in the case of minimising suspension intolerance.
- ▶ **Hazard controls** specific to work conducted at heights.
- ▶ Handling of **hazardous materials** and substances.
- ▶ **Safe operating procedures**.
- ▶ **Personal protective clothing and equipment** prescribed under the regulations and workplace policies and practices.
- ▶ Use of **tools and equipment**.

## 1.3 ACCESS TECHNICAL AND SAFETY INFORMATION BEFORE YOU START

Before starting work at heights, you need to make sure you obtain all the relevant technical and safety information appropriate for your worksite. This will enable you to conduct your work at heights in the safest, most efficient way, in line with OHS/WHS legislation.

This may include:

- ▶ Identification and description of the site of proposed work (Site details).
- ▶ Assessment of conditions and hazards (Hazard report).
- ▶ Work requirements (tasks to be completed) from work orders and supervisor instructions.
- ▶ Identifying equipment defects (Fault reports or isolation systems).
- ▶ Accessing diagrams or plans.
- ▶ Interpreting relevant site signage.
- ▶ Accessing Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for the safe use of chemicals.

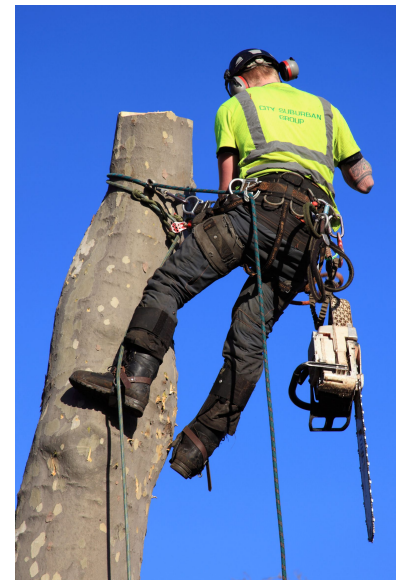


## 2.1 IDENTIFY SCOPE OF TASK AND WORK ACTIVITIES

In planning your work, it is important to identify and document the scope of the tasks, the proposed safe work practices and activities you will undertake to complete them.

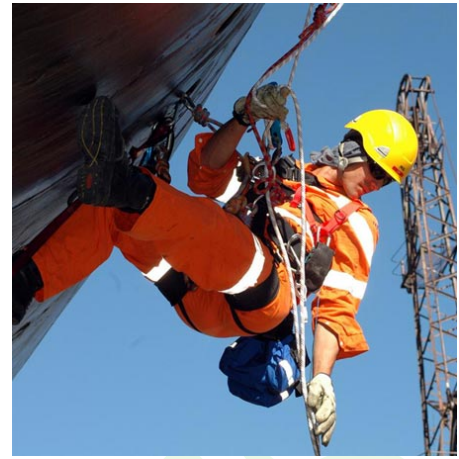
The work performed at heights will involve personnel operating in dangerous elevated positions. This can include working on or around:

- ▶ Bridges, e.g. inspection and maintenance.
- ▶ Buildings, e.g. maintenance, window cleaning, demolition work.
- ▶ Roofs, e.g. maintenance, installing television aerials, placing insulation.
- ▶ Openings in and open edges of floors or walls.
- ▶ Unguarded shafts or excavations.
- ▶ Scaffolds.
- ▶ Elevated work platforms (EWP).
- ▶ Vehicles and other plant.
- ▶ Unguarded platforms and walkways.
- ▶ Order picking forklifts.
- ▶ Forklift platforms.
- ▶ Ladders.
- ▶ Temporary or permanent unstable structures.
- ▶ Fragile or brittle surfaces, e.g. skylights.
- ▶ Places where someone could fall into water, acid or poisonous solutions.
- ▶ Places where someone could fall onto sharp or projecting objects, e.g. a picket fence.
- ▶ Anywhere tools, equipment or material could be dropped onto someone below.



Work at heights may involve many different tasks such as:

- ▶ Construction.
- ▶ Maintenance or repair.
- ▶ Cleaning.
- ▶ Painting.
- ▶ Installation of equipment, systems or plant.
- ▶ Disassembly of structures, plant, equipment or systems.
- ▶ Rescue operations.
- ▶ Roof construction, skylight installation or maintenance.



### 3.1.1 FALL PREVENTION DEVICES



Wherever possible the need to perform work at heights should be avoided completely, however if this is not reasonably practicable, fall prevention devices provide the best protection against falls by working to minimise the chance of a fall ever occurring.

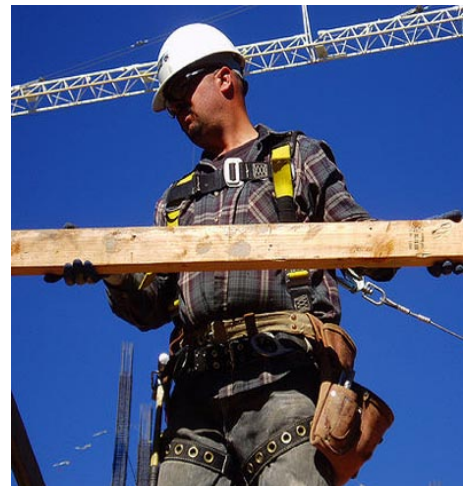
Fall prevention devices include:

- ▶ Temporary work platforms.
- ▶ Edge or perimeter protection systems.
- ▶ Fall protection covers and safety mesh.

### 3.1.3.2 Individual Fall-Arrest Systems

A fall-arrest system is designed to safely stop a worker falling an uncontrolled distance and to reduce the impact of the fall.

Fall-arrest systems must only be considered where higher level control measures are not reasonably practicable.



A fall-arrest system may include:

- ▶ Anchorages.
- ▶ Life lines and static lines.
- ▶ Inertia reel.
- ▶ Lanyard of fixed length.
- ▶ Retractable lifelines.
- ▶ Rope grabs.
- ▶ Wire grabs.
- ▶ Rail system.
- ▶ Shock absorbers, both personal and industrial.
- ▶ Harness.
- ▶ Snap hooks (double or triple action to prevent rollout).
- ▶ Karabiners (double or triple action to prevent rollout).
- ▶ Rescue equipment.



Always select rated components (parts) whenever preparing for work at heights.

The use of non-rated components may lead to malfunction of the equipment, resulting in accidents, injury or death. If you are not sure if the components of a fall-arrest system are rated, you should check with the manufacturer.