

Master Builders Safety Glove

HEIGHTS

HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS FOR WORKING AT HEIGHT

The Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 (ACT) [Regulation] has specific requirements for PCBUs to management of risk of falls. The Regulation does not define any height restrictions. The requirements apply to all risk of falls from one level to another, in spite of the distance from the ground, including the use of work platforms and ladders.

The Regulation also details the hierarchy of control, which describes options to manage risks. The hierarchy of controls is made up of five levels and begins with the Level 1 control, Elimination (the most effective hazard control strategy). The lower order controls (e.g. Level 4 or 5) should only be used when it is not reasonably practicable to use a higher level.

The fall from heights hierarchy of control is :

- Level 1:** Eliminate the hazard by performing the task on the ground or on a solid level surface.
- Level 2:** Use a passive fall prevention device; e.g. edge protection to prevent falls.
- Level 3:** Use a work positioning system; e.g. that limits movement, minimising access to areas where a fall could occur.
- Level 4:** Use a fall arrest system e.g. a harness, which does not eliminate a fall, it stops the worker falling to the ground.
- Level 5:** Use a ladder or implement administrative controls.

There are further requirements for the management of the risk of falls in construction work. Under the Regulation, PCBUs must supply a Safe Work Method Statement

(SWMS) for task over 2 metres above the ground (measured from the worker's feet) or 1.5 metres below 'ground' surface.

To manage the risk of falls, PCBUs are required to follow the hierarchy of controls when working at height:

1. Avoid the risk by not working at height (e.g. work from an existing platform, use EWPS). If it is not practicable then:
2. Use equipment or other measures to prevent falls (i.e. isolate worker from a fall); or
3. Where the risk of a fall cannot be eliminated, use further controls to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall should one occur (e.g. fall arrest system).

Remember, minimisation is only acceptable when you have exhausted elimination and isolation. Doing nothing is not an option.

Apart the requirements for a SWMS, the Regulation does not specifically a written risk assessment to manage falls, if you already know the risks and know how to control them. To achieve the intent of the Regulation, the risk management practices should be documented in the following ways for all activities which have the potential for falls from height:

Work at heights task	Required actions
Any task that involves working at heights (i.e. risk of falls from one level to another).	Do not proceed. Working at heights requires workers to be competent for the tasks being undertaken.
Tasks where the risks are known and how to control them.	Review and adhere to an existing risk assessment or SWMS or Safe Operating Procedure (SOP). Complete and adhere to a risk assessment.
New tasks or a significant change to existing tasks that involves a risk of fall of less than 2 metres.	Apply the hierarchy of control starting at Level 1 (Elimination). If ladders are used, you must state why you are not using a higher level control.
Tasks that involve risk of falls of 2 metres or more above the ground (measured from the worker's feet). OR Tasks that involve risk of falls of 1.5 metres below ground level (measured from the worker's feet).	Any task that involves working at heights (i.e. risk of falls from one level to another).

Further information:

WorkSafe ACT
Preventing Falls in Housing
Construction Code of Practice
W www.legislation.act.gov.au

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