

BS 8454, Code of practice for delivery of training and education for work at height and rescue

The background ...

Introduction

Those who work at height should never forget that gravity is no respecter of persons. It affects everyone; too many times with disastrous consequences resulting in serious, permanent injuries or death¹. According to figures from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)², in 2010/11 38 workers died (171 total) and nearly 4,327 suffered a 'major' injury (25,827 total) as a result of a fall from height. All industry sectors are exposed to the risks presented by this hazard, although the level of incidence varies considerably.

As part of the Work at Height Regulations 2005³ that came into effect on 6 April 2005, those involved in work at height must be competent (or, if being trained, supervised by a competent person)⁴. In addition, every person shall report any activity or defect relating to work at height that he knows is likely to endanger the safety of himself or another person⁵.

Height safety training, in common with all other training, is dependent upon the quality of the training provider, the syllabus to be delivered and the way in which it is delivered. It is recommended, therefore, that delivery of any syllabus be carried out in accordance with a recognised standard; for the use of a syllabus on its own will not necessarily guarantee the quality of the training that a trainee receives. For work at height the benchmark standard is considered to be BS 8454, *Code of Practice for delivery of training for work at a height*⁶.

Advisory Committee on Work at Height Training (ACWAHT)

ACWAHT (now dormant) was established in 2003 by the HSE's Construction Corporate Topic Group (Construction Division Technology Unit, CDTU)⁷, as a project under HSE's Falls from Height Priority Programme. The committee comprised representatives from the main organizations and trade associations involved in delivering work at height training⁸, including WAHSA, IPAF, IRATA, FASET and PASMA. Its purpose was to act as an umbrella organisation in agreeing common work at height training needs, anticipated to meet the then forthcoming Work at Height Regulations 2005.

The committee's remit was:

"To collect and evaluate data and provide guidance on training to achieve the competence required by law for all those involved with work at height".

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- 1 BS 8437: 2005
 - 2 HSE Statistics, www.hse.gov.uk/statistics (Provisional figures)
 - 3 SI 735/2005, www.legislation.gov.uk
 - 4 Regulation 5
 - 5 Regulation 14
 - 6 British Standards Institution, www://shop.bsigroup.com
 - 7 Initially under the leadership of Martin Holden and subsequently, upon his retirement, David Thomas (both HM Principal Specialist Inspectors of Health and Safety (Construction))
 - 8 See <http://www.acwaht.org.uk>

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Products, training and operational support services for professional work at height and rescue

Its aims included:

- To discuss and formulate a common standard for delivery of work at height training;
- To discuss and agree the core technical knowledge and competence to meet the Work at Height Regulations.

These were met through the following objectives:

- The publication of a *training standard* agreed and acceptable for use by all training associations providing training for work at height (and to get this accepted as a British Standard);
- To develop and publish a *core syllabus* which is recognised by HSE as meeting the basic competence requirement of the Work at Height Regulations (and to seek adoption of any recommendations into the constituent member association's own training programmes and by other training providers).

Training standard

The committee looked at different forms of training in various industry sectors, ranging from the prison service to the fire service, as well as mobile access towers and arboriculture. Each constituent member submitted the basis of its course(s) and these were analysed in order to arrive at a common standard for training. This was set out in a guidance document for the delivery of work at height training. It included the full range of stages in the delivery of a typical training course, from course design, bookings, the training itself through to certification.

Syllabus

The concept for the syllabus was borne initially out the desire to establish what every worker should know about work at height activity to keep them safe, until they had been fully trained in any particular aspect. It is not a substitute for detailed training to undertake a task, but provides basic information on safe working practice for work at height; and it is recommended that this be covered in training courses.

The *Work at height awareness syllabus* - covering the basic knowledge (education) required by any worker - was published subsequently, in April 2006. A copy can be downloaded freely from the ACWAHT website⁹.

The Health and Safety Executive welcomed the syllabus and considered it an important document in supporting the effective management of work at height; being an example of partnership working between HSE and Industry.

The delivery of the syllabus can be undertaken in one of a number of ways:

- (a) As a 'Foundation Course' (and a pre-requirement of existing specialised courses);
- (b) In full, within existing specialised courses; or
- (c) In part, within existing specialised courses (using the generic information relevant to all industries together with the industry-specific information relevant to the industry delivering the course).

The syllabus itself does not have third-party accreditation, so course providers need to be very clear in any course literature, or claims, about the parts of the syllabus being delivered.

⁹ http://www.acwaht.org.uk/ACWAHT_Awareness_Syllabus_-_Revision_A-18-04-06.pdf

BS 8454

Following representation to BSI's Technical Committee, PH/5, *Industrial safety belts and harnesses*¹⁰ ACWAHT's draft training standard was accepted as a work item for a new British Standard.

A BSI Project Group was established in November 2004, comprising members of PH/5 and ACWAHT. The Convenor was Mr Keith Jones, of heightec. A final draft was considered by ACWAHT, in April 2005, before being submitted to PH/5 for approval to release it as a 'Draft for Public Comment' (DPC). The DPC¹¹ was published by BSI on 2 December 2005. The closing date for comments was 28 February 2006 (extended to 17 March 2006). The Standard was published subsequently in May 2006, as BS 8454: 2006, *Code of practice for delivery of training and education for work at height and rescue*.

It covers the main stages in the delivery of a topical training course, including:

Course design

- Learning objectives are defined

Course enquiries

- Scope of training and pre-requisites are advised
- Course prospectus provided

Course bookings

- Registration form completed
- Joining instructions sent
- Training and assessment checklist(s) drawn up

Arrival of trainees

- Medical disclaimers checked

Course commences

- Trainers qualified and up-to-date
- All documents current
- Risk assessment completed for training area(s)
- Equipment appropriate and checked
- Course delivered in accordance with documents
- Pre-use check of equipment

During training

- Rescue procedure(s) identified and appropriate equipment available

Assessment

- Criteria for knowledge are defined
- Assessment undertaken, as defined
- Records kept

¹⁰ Now *Personal fall protection*

¹¹ BS 8454, *Delivery for training for work at height*, Ref. DPC 05/30117509 DC

Course debrief

- Discussion of assessment with trainees, in particular safety-critical mistakes
- Feedback form completed

Course completion

- Equipment properly stored

Certification

- Documentary evidence issued
- Records kept

Auditing

- Audit undertaken and actioned
- Feedback forms reviewed
- Review meetings held
- Measures taken to implement continual improvement

Closing remarks

Within heightec the requirements of BS 8454 are integral to its management system and subject to external audit from SGS¹², its notified body, in the same way as its manufacturing operations. Elements from the ACWAHT core syllabus are included within TFP0¹³, which forms the start of most courses, and within the heightec-prepared publication received by all delegates¹⁴.

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May 2012

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¹² www.sgs.com

¹³ Introduction to personal fall protection

¹⁴ *Foundations for work at height*