

## With respect to gravity...

### Introduction

Those involved in work at height must be competent (or, if being trained, supervised by a competent person)<sup>1</sup>. 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*<sup>2</sup>.

### Advisory Committee on Work at Height Training (ACWAHT)

ACWAHT (now dormant) was established by the HSE's Construction Corporate Topic Group (Construction Division Technology Unit, CDTU), 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 training<sup>3</sup>, 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 Regulations. One of its objectives was 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).

### 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.

### BS 8454

Following representation to BSI's Technical Committee, PH/5, *Industrial safety belts and harnesses*<sup>4</sup> ACWAHT's draft training standard was accepted as a work item for a new British Standard.

A BSI Project Group was established, comprising members of PH/5 and ACWAHT (led by a representative from heightec). A draft for public comment<sup>5</sup> was published by BSI, with the

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<sup>1</sup> Work at Height Regulations 2005, SI 735/2005, [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)

<sup>2</sup> British Standards Institution, [www://shop.bsigroup.com](http://www://shop.bsigroup.com)

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.acwaht.org.uk>

<sup>4</sup> Now *Personal fall protection*

<sup>5</sup> BS 8454, *Delivery for training for work at height*, Ref. DPC 05/30117509 DC

Standard published subsequently in May 2006 as BS 8454: 2006, *Code of practice for delivery of training and education for work at height and rescue.* Continued...

The Standard covers the main stages in the delivery of a typical 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

**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

**Train the Trainer**

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The heightec Group Ltd, Lake District Business Park, Mint Bridge Road, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 6NH, UK

Tel: +44 (0) 1539 728866

Email: [admin@heightec.com](mailto:admin@heightec.com) Web: [heightec.com](http://heightec.com)



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BS 8454 is applicable to all training and education for work at height. This includes “train-the-trainer” type situations, “... *in which an employer engages a training provider, or employs a* *Continued...*

*trainer, to deliver training for a single specific task, or on a specific product, to some of their employees who then in turn provide training to other employees*”. However, of note, implementation of “train-the-trainer” frequently results in shortfalls in implementing the recommendations of the Standard, for example:

- Keeping trained trainers abreast of changes, e.g., legislation, industry guidelines, best practice, etc. (continuing professional development);
- A lack of opportunities to seek out new skills undertake and keep up-to-date with training, knowledge and experience;
- ‘Custom and practice’ creeping in, with bad habits becoming the norm;
- Trainers, often working individually, not having sufficient opportunities to practice dealing with emergencies;
- Varied auditing of training provision, if any, and the lack of a robust, comprehensive and documented management system;
- Lack of clarity over who is responsible for the inspection, care and maintenance of training equipment and facilities; and
- Lack of clarity in the provision of a course prospectus, syllabus and learning objectives.

**Closing remarks**

Gravity is no respecter of persons; all too often, a failure or shortcoming results in death or serious injury. Individuals must, “... *understand fully any potential hazards related to the work and the equipment to be used ... (and) ... detect any technical defects or omissions in that work and equipment ...*”. The full implementation of the recommendations in BS 8454, Code of Practice for delivery of training for work at a height, is commended. The use of a syllabus on its own will not necessarily guarantee the quality of the training that a trainee receives.

Within *heightec*, the requirements of BS 8454 are integral to its management system and subject to external audit from its notified body; in the same way as its manufacturing operations.

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