Working at height - The hierarchy of protection

The Work at Height Regulations set out an hierarchy of options when planning work at height. The hierarchy uses the concept of “avoid – prevent – mitigate” and the available options are set out in descending order of preference:

AVOID	**Collective protection**	**Individual protection**
PREVENT	**1.** Barrier, guardrail, etc., MEWPs	**2.** Work restraint system, personal fall prevention system (e.g. valley frame).
MITIGATE Minimise height *and* consequences	**3.** Safety netting (rigged high), soft landing system (close to work)	**4.** Personal fall protection equipment (in order of preference: rope access, work positioning, fall arrest).
Minimise the consequences	**5.** Soft landing system, safety netting (rigged low)	**6.** Inflatable injury prevention (e.g. air jacket), other (e.g. life jacket when working over water)
Work equipment that does neither (e.g. ladders, step-ladders, hop-ups, trestles, etc.)	**7.** Minimise the risk of fall occurring through instruction, training and supervision	

Table 1 – The hierarchy of work at height

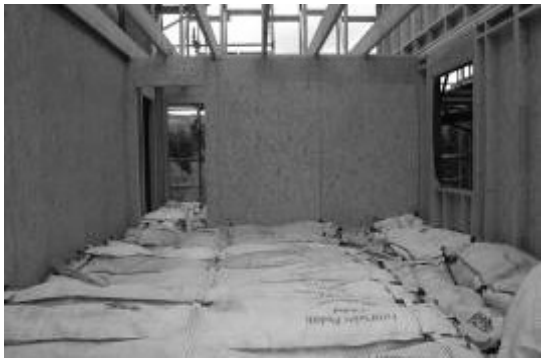
Examples of work at height

The following photographs give examples of work at height. They show different scenario from Table 1, *The hierarchy of work at height*; including examples of collective and individual protection as well as examples that ‘avoid - prevent - mitigate’.

Preventing a fall - Collective protection

Minimising distance and consequences - Collective protection

Avoiding work at a height



Minimising consequences – Collective protection

Preventing falls – Collective protection
(NOTE: Gaps too big)

Minimising distance and consequences – Collective protection

Preventing falls – Collective protection

Preventing falls – Collective protection

Preventing falls (side) and Minimising consequences (rear) – Collective protection

Minimising distance and consequences – Collective protection

Minimising distance and consequences – Individual protection

Stepladder platform:
Preventing falls – Individual protection

Preventing falls – Collective protection
(NOTE: Some argue that the use of MEWPs is individual protection)

Preventing falls – Collective protection

Preventing a fall – Collective protection
(NOTE: Photo shows the use of 'walk on netting')

Preventing a fall – Collective protection
(NOTE: The height of the edge parapet is inadequate)

Preventing a fall – Collective equipment
(NOTE: Bespoke mobile access equipment)

Preventing a fall – Collective protection

Minimising distance (depending upon the fall factor) and consequences – Individual protection

Minimising distance (depending upon the fall factor) and consequences – Individual protection

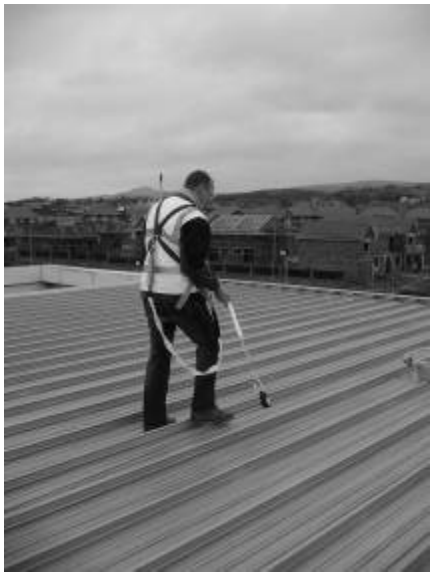
Minimising distance and consequences (work positioning) – Individual protection

Minimising distance and consequences – Individual protection

Rescue: Minimising the distance and consequences of a fall (work positioning) – Individual protection

Minimising distance and consequences (work positioning with fall arrest back-up) – Individual protection

Preventing a fall – Individual protection



Preventing a fall (work restraint) – Individual protection

Advance guard rail:
Preventing a fall – Collective protection

'Through the trap (3T)'
Preventing a fall - Collective protection
NOTE: Minimising the distance and consequences during erection.

Preventing a fall (work restraint) – Individual protection

Preventing a fall (Tallescope) – Individual protection

Minimising distance (depending upon the fall factor) and consequences – Individual protection

Preventing a fall (using an 'existing place of work') – Collective protection

Use of a ladder (with a stability device) – 'bottom of the hierarchy'

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