

STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

The management must be proactive to implement sound safety and health systems, including proper risk assessments and incident reporting systems, provide adequate resources, and ensure that such information is disseminated to employees and other persons exposed to the risks. Here is a list of initial steps that is by no means exhaustive, that you can take to create a safer and healthier workplace:

- Conduct risk assessment to spot and identify any unsafe work place and work practices.
- Develop and convey safe work procedures to all workers.
- Form a safety committee to overlook the overall safety in the worksite.

- Conduct site assessments to ensure worksite conditions are suitable for work.
- Train workers on the proper use of the individual fall arrest system.
- Take immediate action to correct any undesirable behaviour observed in the worksite.
- Set up a buddy system to encourage workers to comply with rules and best practices.



TAKE THE LEAD

Implement a Work At Height programme at your workplace today!

With something for everyone, from top management and safety professionals to the supervisors and workers, the WSH Council's Work At Height Kit is a valuable resource that will help you start your own programme.

The Work At Height Kit includes:

1. Technical Advisory for Safety Professional

The technical advisory covers case study analysis as well as provides tips and risk control measures that can be implemented to help eliminate or reduce the risk of falling from height at the workplace.

2. Supervisor's Guidebook

The Supervisor's Guidebook highlights the roles and responsibilities of supervisors in workplace safety. It flags out areas that require special attention while working at height as well as elaborates on possible fall prevention measures that can be undertaken while at the worksite.

3. Worker's Safety Handbook

The Worker's Safety Handbook is an illustrated booklet that captures the Dos and Don'ts when working at height. This handy booklet serves as a reminder for workers on the good practices relevant to various common work activities that might expose them to the risk of falling from height.

4. WSH Videos and Animation Compilation DVD

This DVD is a compilation of videos and animations focused on the importance of safety when working at height and other workplace hazards. It also features real life stories and accident case studies of workers whose lives were dramatically changed, as a result of workplace accidents. A short video clip on falling from heights demonstrated using a dummy drop is also included.

5. Work At Height Poster and Catalogue

Create awareness of working safely at height with the Work At Height poster. This poster highlights common safe work procedures that should be observed while working at height. The accompanying poster catalogue showcases a series of existing posters related to work at height.

6. Work At Height Stickers

This series of stickers focuses on safety messages to take note of while working at height. Place these stickers at strategic locations at your workplace to remind workers of potential fall hazards.

All of the above materials can be downloaded from the WSH Council website at www.wshc.gov.sg. For more copies of the publications, email your request to contact@wshc.gov.sg. Your request will be acceded to, subject to availability of stock.

Let Us Know

Share with us what your organisation is doing to embark on a Work At Height programme at your workplace. Simply drop us an email at contact@wshc.gov.sg. Additional sets of the Work At Height Kit will be sent to you!

CEO's Guide to Work at Height



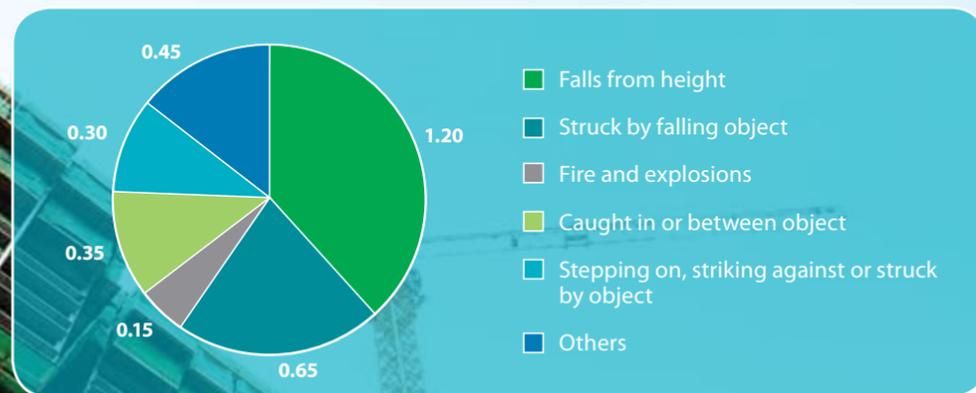
INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years, accidents involving persons falling from height have been the number one cause of workplace fatalities in Singapore. In 2007, almost one out of every three workers killed at work were due to falls.

Whenever there are safety and health lapses particularly those resulting in injury or fatality, the immediate cause of the lapse or accident is often attributed to the workers' failure to observe safety precautions. However, on deeper analysis, many of these lapses can be traced to a combination of organisational and systemic failures in the overall management of workplace safety and health.

Therefore, it is crucial that an effective management system is implemented in your workplace to safeguard the safety and health of your workers.

Fatality Rate per 100,000 Workers by Type of Accident



MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

As leaders of organisations, directors have statutory and moral responsibilities to fulfill. The commitment of top management in implementing workplace safety and health measures is critical. Directors need to rise up to the challenge, provide strong leadership and lead by example. There should also be recognition of personal responsibilities and liabilities under the Workplace Safety and Health Act.

Legal Responsibilities

The Workplace Safety and Health Act requires directors and managers of companies to exercise due diligence with regard to workplace safety and health in addition to their corporate duties. The Act imposes a general duty of care on the part of duty holders to take reasonably practicable measures to ensure the safety and health of both workers and visitors at workplaces.

In particular, directors and managers of companies should be aware that:

- Section 47 states that if it is alleged that any person has failed to comply with a duty to do something as far as is reasonably practicable, the onus is on that person to prove that it was not reasonably practicable to do more than what was being done or there was no better practicable means to satisfy that duty.
- Section 48 states that where a 'body corporate' commits a safety and health offence, any director, manager, secretary or other similar officer of the body corporate could be held personally accountable and liable.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO FALLS

Safe Work Procedures

The lack of proper safe work procedures and its implementation were major contributory factors in all types of falls identified. Workers working at heights were exposed to risks which could have been easily avoided or mitigated if there had been proper safe work procedures and the workers had adhered to them.

Individual Fall Arrest System

The failure to provide an individual fall arrest system (e.g. safety harness), and the improper use of such systems by workers, are major contributory factors in many instances. In other cases, those who did wear the fall arrest device failed to properly secure it to a suitable anchor point, resulting in the device being ineffective when much needed.

Poor Work Environment

Unsafe work conditions, equipment or structures, such as an unstable scaffold that toppled, contributed to a significant number of falls from height cases. Unsatisfactory work conditions such as inadequate lighting, lack of hazard warnings and poor housekeeping are also common causes of accidents.

Inadequate Fall Prevention System

In many cases, falls from height and falls into depth, have been attributed to the absence of or improper use of fall prevention/protection systems, which includes guard railing, scaffold, and cover for openings.

Violation of Rules / Improper Work Behaviour

Unsafe acts or improper work behaviours often put the workers themselves and other co-workers at risk as has been noted in many instances. These behaviours include:

- Workers not using their personal protective equipment (PPE);
- Workers not following safe work and/or in-house rules and regulation;
- Workers using uncertified equipment or the misuse of equipment; and
- Workers taking shortcuts.

These work behaviours were largely attributed to the workers' lack of knowledge of the inherent dangers in their tasks or at their workplace, and the safe and proper manner to carry out the tasks.

