

Whitepaper - Workplace Safety Issues

Equipment Maintenance

The workplace and the equipment, devices and systems should be maintained (including cleaned) in an efficient state, efficient working order and good repair. This maintenance is required for mechanical ventilation systems, equipment and devices which would cause a risk to health or safety should a fault occur. Examples of equipment or devices, which require a system of maintenance include emergency lighting; powered doors; escalators and moving walkways.

Condition of Floors and Traffic Routes

Floors and traffic routes should have adequate strength and stability taking in account the loads placed on them and the traffic passing over them.

The surfaces of floors and traffic routes should be free from any pothole, slope or uneven or slippery surface, which may cause a person to slip, trip or fall; drop or lose control of a load or; cause instability or loss of control of a vehicle. Leaks or spillages should be dealt with immediately. Arrangements should be made to minimise the dangers of snow or ice i.e. gritting, snow clearing or closure of routes.

Restrictions or obstructions should be clearly indicated. In areas where there are sharp or blind bends or where vehicles may be reversing, consideration should be given to one-way systems, visibility mirrors and / or speed limits. If pedestrians have to share or cross pedestrian routes, additional measures need to be taken, i.e. marking of routes, provision of crossing points etc.

Open sides of staircases should be securely fenced. The fencing should consist of an upper rail at 900 mm or higher and a lower rail. Handrails should be provided on at least one side of every staircase (except where this would obstruct access / egress). A handrail should be provided at both sides of a staircase where there is a particular risk of falling.

Holes, bumps or uneven areas which may cause a person to trip or fall, should be rectified. Until they can be made good, precautions should be taken to prevent accidents i.e. barriers, warning signs etc. Temporary holes should have adequate guarding.

Falls

You must do all that is reasonably practicable to prevent anyone falling from height. When working at height, there is a simple hierarchy for managing and selecting suitable equipment:

- Avoid work at height where possible.
- Use work equipment or other measures to prevent falls where work at height cannot be avoided.
- Where the risk of a fall cannot be eliminated, use work equipment or other measures to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall should one occur.

Secure fencing / guardrails should be provided to prevent people falling from edges or objects falling onto persons. Where fencing / guardrails cannot be provided, other measures should be taken to prevent falls.

Adequate precautions should be taken where there is a risk of a person falling through a roof or other fragile surface, i.e. crawling boards, fall arrest devices. Fragile surfaces should be clearly marked with warning notices.

Fixed ladders should only be used where it is not practicable to install a staircase. Fixed ladders should be of sound construction, properly maintained and securely fixed. Rungs of a ladder should be horizontal and give adequate support. Unless another handhold exists, the stiles of the ladder should extend 1100 mm above any landing point. Ladders over 2.5m long should where possible be fitted with safety hoops or permanently fixed fall-arrest systems.

Falling Objects

Materials must be stored in a way so that they are not likely to fall and cause an injury. Racking should be of adequate strength and stability with regards to the loads being placed on them. Racking must be subject to regular checks; reporting any damage to a responsible person and by fixing maximum loads notices.

To ensure safe stacking and storage take the following precautions:

- stack safely on sound pallets;
- use wrapping to prevent articles from falling;
- set limits for the height of the stack;
- provide instruction and training to employee on safe stacking;
- make special arrangements for objects which may be difficult to store.

Transparent or Translucent Doors, Gates or Walls and Windows

If there is a risk of people coming into contact with glazing and being hurt, then it must be ensured that windows, transparent surfaces in walls, partitions, gates and doors should be made of safety material or be protected against breakage. If there is a danger of collision, then the transparent or translucent surface should be marked to make it clearly visible.

Windows, Skylights and Ventilators

Windows, skylights and ventilators which are capable of being opened should be safe, and without risk to persons when opened. Windows and skylights should be designed so that they can be cleaned safely.

Doors and Gates

Doors and gates should be fitted with safety devices if necessary. Doors and gates, which swing both ways, should be fitted with a viewing panel. Power operated gates and doors should have a readily accessible control switch so that they can be stopped quickly in an emergency. Upward opening doors or gates should be fitted with a device to prevent them from falling back.

Escalators and Moving Walkways

Escalators and moving walkways should function safely, be equipped with any necessary safety devices and be fitted with emergency stop controls which are easily identifiable and readily accessible. A Workplace Facilities checklist form can be found in Guardian. This can be used by the employer/ responsible person to assess compliance with their obligations in relation to workplace requirements.

This information is provided for general reference purposes only. If you have a specific enquiry relating to this topic please contact Wirehouse on:

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Workplace Safety Issues updated 09/07/2019