

Work at Height

Introduction

Work at height causes many serious accidents and care is needed to ensure that these accidents do not happen in clubs. The issues to manage include:

- Falls from elevated parts of buildings and structures (ladders, flat roofs, etc.)
- Falls through fragile surfaces and
- Falls into an opening in a floor or a hole in the ground.

Make sure work is properly planned, supervised and carried out by competent people with the skills, knowledge and experience to do the job. You must use the right type of equipment for working at height.

Take a sensible approach when considering precautions for work at height. There may be some low-risk situations where common sense tells you no particular precautions are necessary and the law recognises this.

What does “height” mean?

A place where a person could fall a distance likely to cause injury. This definition is extracted from the [regulations](#). The normal use of a staircase is excluded from these regulations but is included in others. Many accidents occur on stairs so they will be included here.

What should we do?

Identify any routine activities that involve working at height. These may include climbing onto a low level “hop up” platform when putting boats onto racking. See the note on this below.

Avoid the need to work at height, do as much as possible from ground level.

If it is necessary to work at height then first complete a risk assessment and use it to define a safe method of work. Ensure that the right equipment is used, that this equipment is in good condition and that the people involved are competent to perform the task.

Clubs are advised to ensure that ...

- People can get safely to and from where they work at height
- The equipment is suitable, stable and strong enough for the job, maintained and checked regularly
- People do not overload or overreach when working at height
- People take precautions when working on or near fragile surfaces
- Protection from falling objects is provided
- Emergency evacuation and rescue procedures are considered

ClubHub provides general guidance to clubs and their members. It is however the responsibility of each club to maintain up-to-date risk assessments and define and monitor its own safety practices, guidance and procedures specific to its environment and activities, which clubs shall ensure are made known to their members and members shall comply with the same.

Whilst every effort is made to ensure that the information and guidance in this manual is accurate and reflective of best practice at the time of publication, it is the users' responsibility to ensure that such information and guidance is up to date before acting upon it. British Rowing accepts no responsibility for the content of third party websites accessed through links in this publication.

Can ladders and steps be used?

Ladders and stepladders are not banned under health and safety law. They can be a sensible and practical option for low-risk, short-duration tasks.

There is a right and a wrong way to use ladders as shown here.

Before starting to use a ladder or steps check that it is in good condition. In particular:-

Check the stiles (the posts that support the rungs or steps) – make sure they are not bent or damaged, as the ladder could buckle or collapse.

Check the feet – if they are missing, worn or damaged the ladder could slip. Also check feet when moving from soft/dirty ground (e.g. dug soil, loose sand/stone, a dirty workshop) to a smooth, solid surface (e.g. paving slabs), to make sure the foot material and not the dirt (e.g. soil, chippings or embedded stones) is making contact with the ground.

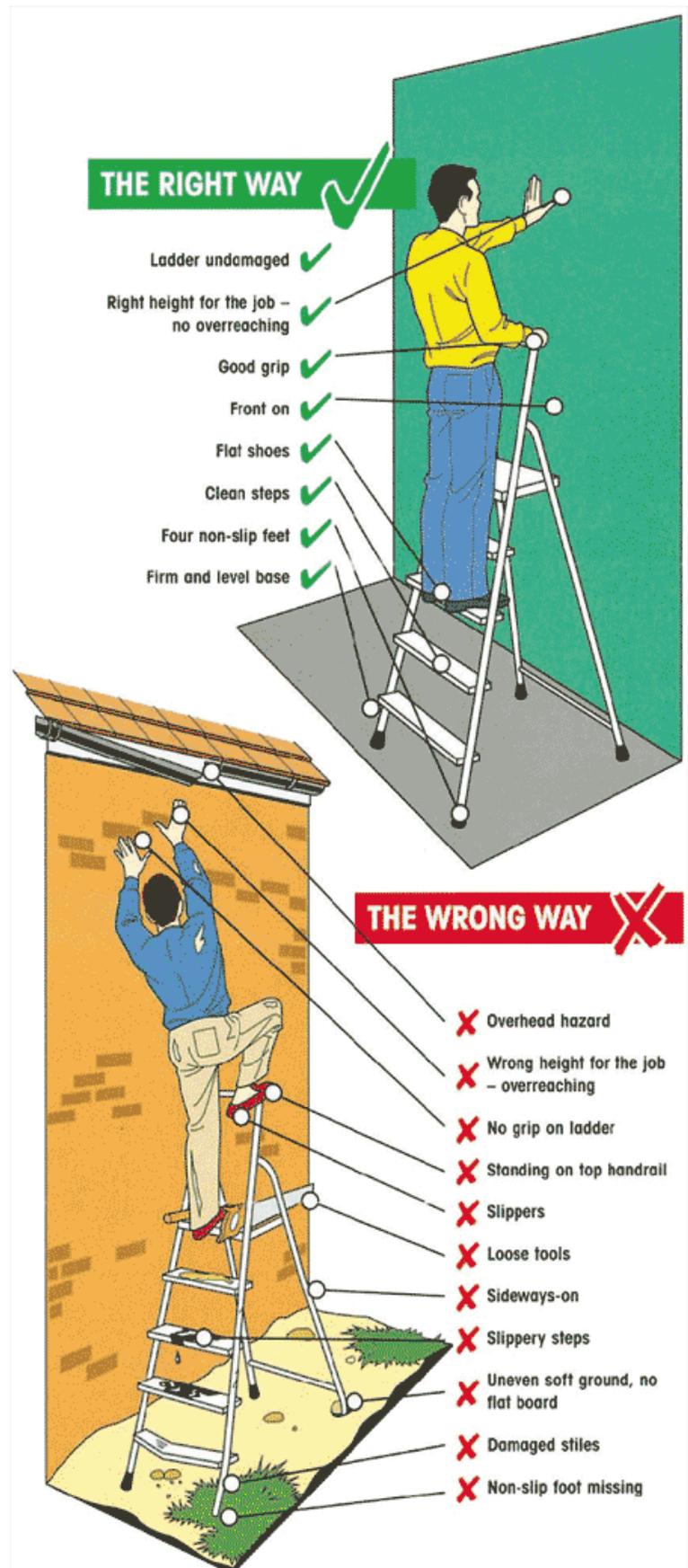
Check the rungs or steps – if they are bent, worn, missing or loose the ladder or steps could fail.

Check any locking mechanisms – if they are bent or the fixings are worn or damaged the ladder or steps could collapse. Ensure any locking bars are engaged.

Check the stepladder platform – if it is split or buckled the ladder could become unstable or collapse.

Check the steps or treads on stepladders – if they are contaminated they could be slippery; if the fixings are loose on steps, they could collapse.

There is more guidance [here](#).



Using “hop-ups” or platforms to reach boat racking

These can be used providing they are stable, not too high, and large enough to minimise the risk of stepping off the edge.

If the platform is high then it may be necessary to fit handrails on the platform and steps to prevent falls. There is no clear specification, based on height, to determine whether handrails are required. If the use is intermittent and occasional and the presence of handrails would cause an extra risk as they could interfere with the movement of riggers then they may not be required.

There is no clear advice on how high platforms can be without having guard rails but there is some guidance in “BS EN ISO 14122, Safety of machinery - Permanent means of access to machinery - Part 3: Stairs, stepladders and guard-rails”. This indicates that hand rails are not needed for platforms where the potential fall height is less than 500mm.

Legal Requirements

The relevant regulation is the

Work at Height Regulations 2005

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2005/735/contents/made>

Further Information

For further information see

Working at Height, a Brief Guide at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg401.pdf>

Safe use of ladders and stepladders <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg455.pdf>