

University of Wisconsin - La Crosse

Environmental Health and Safety Policy

Subject: Fall Prevention – Scaffold, Elevated Work Platforms, Roofs, Ladders
Original: May 1994
Last Update: June 2021

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

To establish a uniform practice for the use of fall protection equipment when work assignments expose University of Wisconsin La Crosse (UWL) employees to conditions which could cause falls resulting in occupational injury or death.

II. POLICY

A safe and healthful working environment will be provided for all UWL employees. When elimination of a hazard, substitution to a less hazardous practice, engineering, or administrative controls will not provide an acceptable level of protection, personal protective equipment will be provided to achieve safe working conditions. When fall protection equipment is necessary, the requirements of this standard shall be followed.

III. ENGINEERING CONTROLS

As feasible, all operations from which there is a drop of more than 4 feet shall be guarded by rail, picket fence, half door or equivalent barrier. Barrier design must be minimally compliant with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations and building codes adopted by the State of Wisconsin. Ladders under 20 feet are exempted from this requirement. Where barriers are not feasible for work at elevated heights (greater than 4 feet) fall protection equipment shall be used.

IV. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements for fall protection vary depending upon specific tasks being conducted. If tasks are not identified below, the individual required to work at an elevated height shall receive approval from their supervisor prior to proceeding. The supervisor or employee can also contact Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) for assistance.

Scaffolding:

OSHA regulations related to fall protection from scaffolds is available at [29 CFR 1926.451\(g\)](#). There are multiple types of scaffolds, with all requiring that each employee on a scaffold more than 10 feet above a lower level shall be protected from falling to that lower level. Employees shall be protected by the use of personal fall arrest systems or guardrail systems meeting OSHA requirements.

Articulating Elevated Work Platforms:

Each employee must be protected by a full-body harness and positioning lanyard. The length of the positioning lanyard must be sized to prevent/restrain the employee from exiting or being ejected from the platform. Lanyards shall not be shock-absorbing. The fall restraint equipment shall be appropriately sized and shall be securely attached to the manufacturer designated anchorage point.

Flat Roofs:

When work is performed less than 6 feet from the roof edge, every employee must be protected from falling by a 42 inch height guardrail, travel restraint system, or personal fall arrest system. These three fall prevention methods also apply for work between 6-15 feet unless the work is infrequent and temporary. The employee's supervisor shall determine if the work is infrequent or temporary. Infrequent generally means the task or job is performed only on occasion, when needed (e.g., equipment breakdown), or at sporadic or irregular intervals. Temporary generally means the duration of the task the employee performs is brief or short. Short duration tasks generally are those that take less than 1-2 hours to complete.

Inclement weather, including but not limited to snow, ice, high winds, or rain creates a hazard for all operations conducted on roofs. The employee shall take additional precautions dependent upon the severity of the inclement weather and the task being performed. As necessary the employee should contact their supervisor to review additional precautions. Work shall not be conducted on roofs during lightning storms.

Confined Space:

Each employee entering a permit required confined space, requiring a vertical retrieval, shall don a full-body harness, attached to a life line and winch capable of retrieving the employee. Additional information on fall protection in permit required confined spaces is included in the written UW-L Confined Space Entry Program.

V. WORKING ALONE

Two personnel must be present during any activity requiring use of fall protective equipment. The safety back-up shall contact University Police in case of any incident requiring emergency services.

VI. INSPECTIONS

Components of fall protection equipment must be inspected by the employee using the equipment prior to each use. If a piece of equipment displays any of the following conditions the item must be immediately withdrawn from use. The employee completing the inspection should consult manufacturer inspection recommendations for specific care instructions. General signs of wear follow.

- Cuts or frayed edges
- Abrasions
- Mildew or mold
- Stretching
- Chemical degradation
- Dryness
- Corrosion or charring
- Broken stitches
- Inner fiber fuzziness
- Rivets that are loose or distorted
- Tar or similar products that penetrate and harden in the fibers
- Deformed thimbles or enlarged buckle tongue holes or grommets
- Damaged or distorted snap hooks or faulty springs
- Cracks or distortions in fall protection hardware

VII. LADDERS

When ladders are improperly selected, used, and maintained they can pose a fall hazard. Some of the basic requirements to minimize and eliminate such hazards are as follows.

Selection:

- Only use commercially purchased Type IA or better ladders with a minimum 300 pound duty rating and an appropriate height that prevents standing above the third highest step.
- Do not select metal ladders when working on or near electrical equipment.
- Do not use makeshift ladders, such as boxes, barrels, or chairs. Do not place ladders on such articles for additional height.

Use:

- The distance from the bottom of a straight ladder to its support wall shall be one-quarter the working length of the ladder. In other words, for every 4 feet vertical the ladder base should move 1 foot horizontal.
- Set up ladders on a firm level surface.
- Where possible, straight ladders should be secured at the top and blocked at the bottom.
- For standard ladders, the two highest steps and top platform shall not be used for climbing.
- If a straight ladder is used to climb onto an elevated work location, it shall extend at least 3 1/2 feet above the working level.
- Do not over-reach, jump, or slide a ladder while on it. Exit the ladder and move it as work progresses.
- Always face the ladder and use both hands while going up or down.
- Tools or materials should be raised by means of a rope after the climber has reached the working position.
- Barricades and warning signs should be posted when ladders are placed near doors or other locations where they could be struck.
- Two personnel shall handle and set up all extension ladders.
- Ladders should not be used by more than one person at a time.

Maintenance:

- Prior to use inspect the ladder for defects such as missing cleats, damaged rungs, broken spreaders, or other visible damage. Defective ladders must be immediately removed from service. A damaged ladder must be tagged or marked: "Dangerous, Do Not Use". Apply tag while waiting for repair or prior to being thrown-away.
- Ladders should be stored where they will not be exposed to exterior weather. Ladders should not be stored near radiators, steam pipes, or in places subjected to excessive heat, chemical splash, or dampness.
- Do not paint ladders. Clear wood preservative can be used to protect bare wood ladders.

VIII. TRAINING

UWL shall provide a training program for all employees engaged in work at elevated heights requiring the use of personal protective equipment. The employees shall be trained in the safety procedures to be followed in order to recognize and prevent falls. This training shall include:

- Methods to identify potential fall hazards.
- The function, use, operation, inspection, and maintenance of personal protective equipment.
- Procedures to identify and inspect substantial members of the structure, or securely rigged lines, which will safely suspend the worker in case of a fall.
- Alternative administrative or engineering controls that can be used to minimize or eliminate the use of personal fall protection equipment.

Task and equipment specific training will be provided for other recognized hazards.

- Individuals identified as operators of elevated work platforms shall be instructed on the operation and inspection of the equipment. Training shall be for specific type of equipment being used and the employee must demonstrate proficiency for each equipment type prior to becoming a qualified equipment operator.
- Individuals required to work on scaffolds shall be instructed on their construction, use, and inspection of the structure.
- Individuals required to use fall protection equipment in permit required confined spaces will receive training as outlined in the written UW-L Confined Space Entry Program.

All UWL personnel required to use ladders shall receive instructions from their supervisor or other designated individual in the proper methods to use, inspect, maintain, and store stepladders.

IX. APPROVAL

The fall prevention standard is effective immediately. All University of Wisconsin La Crosse employees shall fulfill their responsibilities as designated within this written standard.