ACCESS TO HEIGHTS

Access to height can be achieved by means of:

- Fixed ladders (or inclined stairway) and gantries or catwalks
- Temporary portable ladders
- Access equipment, such as a mobile elevating work platform (MEWP), commonly known as a Cherrypicker
- Telehandler fitted with a suitably approved (CE marked) and tested man basket
- Scaffolding

Where access to height may involve a fall of 2 metres or more (or where the fall could be less than this but there is a risk of injury) then fall prevention or protection measures must be in place.

**Golden Rule 3 – Never work above 2 metres unless:**

- You have fall prevention or protection measures in place
- You wear a safety harness fastened to a suitable anchor point if the task requires it.

Access or working at height **MUST NOT** involve:

- the use of a loading shovel bucket
- the roof of a vehicle – such as a van, truck or dumper
- any other improvised method.

Fixed ladders or catwalks are the most suitable method of gaining access and working at height, and should be installed where regular access is necessary.

**Golden Rule 3 - Do not work at any height where there is a risk of injury from falling unless:**

- All other options have been ruled out
- Risks have been assessed
- You have a Safe System of Work.
Fixed Ladders and Catwalks

- The fixed ladder must be fitted with hoops when the ladder extends to more than 2½ metres, and
- The handrail around the working area or along the platform must be of sufficient height (at least 1.1m in height with an intermediate rail and a kickboard)
- Never lean or work outside the handrail without wearing a harness
- Never use the handrail as a step to reach inaccessible places.

Guidance concerning the requirements for fixed vertical ladders, stairways, gantries and catwalks may be found in the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations, 1992 and associated Guidance Notes.

Temporary Portable Ladders

Are for the purpose of gaining temporary access to a place where access is not normally required, or for inspecting an otherwise inaccessible place.

- They should not be used as a working place (the only general exception to this applies to Window Cleaners, who can use ladders to undertake their work).
- When used, the portable ladder should be set up on level firm ground, either footed at the base or lashed at the top.
Mobile Elevating Work Platforms (MEWPs) or ‘Cherrypickers’

Are extremely versatile devices for gaining access to height. However specific precautions must be observed, which include:

Daily or prior to use:

- The operator must be trained to operate the vehicle
- The equipment must only be used on level firm ground, unless a levelling device is fitted
- The payload of the man basket must never be exceeded
- The equipment must never be used as a crane (used to sling or suspend loads), nor must it be used to lift or raise plant when in use (such as lifting pipes), as overturning may result
- The operative(s) should be wearing and using a fall arrest device and suitable harness
- Never attach the harness to anything outside the basket
- Never operate the equipment while the basket is raised
- If overhead power lines are present then an exclusion area near the cables must be maintained, and a banksman must be employed
- Always ensure that the equipment cannot be run into by other plant when in use - create an effective barrier around the operating area
- Never use the handrail as a step, or straddle outside the basket
- The rams operating the platform must not allow the basket to drop or slew if an hydraulic leak occurs.

The platform must have been examined within the last six months.

Further information and guidance should be obtained from the supplier, hirer or manufacturer of the equipment.
Telehandlers fitted with a man basket require the same precautionary measures as those applied to “Cherrypickers”. Additionally:

- The man basket must be positively attached to the telehandler lift boom
- The telehandler must not be moved while the basket is occupied.

The supplier/hirer or manufacturer of the telehandler must be consulted to ensure that the machine is suitable and approved for the attachment of a man basket.

Always keep a safe distance from overhead power lines.

Scaffolding (except portable tower scaffolds) may only be built by competent scaffold erectors.

Portable tower scaffolds must:

- Be constructed on level firm ground
- Not exceed the 4:1 ratio (height: narrowest width)
- Provide fall protection during construction
- Allow access within the tower (if overturn is likely by attaching a ladder outside)
- Be fitted with a handrail and suitable secure flooring to the working area
- Be provided with the maximum loading
- Be constructed by trained persons

QUESTIONS – (there may be more than one correct answer)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Above what potential fall height do you need prevention or protection measures in place?</td>
<td>1.5 metres</td>
<td>2.0 metres</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>At what height must fixed ladders be fitted with hoops?</td>
<td>2 metres</td>
<td>2.5 metres</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>When should ladders and access equipment be checked for obvious visual defects?</td>
<td>6 monthly</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Do you always need to use a fall arrest device and harness in a ‘Cherrypicker’?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Only if you have to reach outside the basket</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Do you need to be trained to erect a portable tower scaffold?</td>
<td>No – just follow supplier’s instructions</td>
<td>Depends on the final height of the tower</td>
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Carried out by
Name (Print):
(Signature):

Unit: Date: