



# Prevention of Falls when Working at Heights

POLICY



## Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact Ocean Grove Primary School on 52551340 or email: [ocean.grove.ps@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:ocean.grove.ps@education.vic.gov.au)

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to prevent falls by outlining the requirements for safely working at height.

## Summary

- For the purposes of this policy, 'working at heights' means working in any place where there is a risk of falling more than 2 metres, measured from the soles of your feet to the ground.
- For policy relating to working at 2 metres or less in height from the ground, refer to: [Slips, Trips and Falls Prevention](#).
- Activities commonly associated with working at heights in schools include, but are not limited to:
  - cleaning of gutters
  - retrieving objects from a roof or gutter (for example, balls)
  - setting up lights in a theatre
  - decorating high ceiling classrooms.
- Schools are encouraged to engage a contractor to complete tasks that require working at heights, where possible.
- Principals or their delegates, in consultation with affected individuals, and health and safety representatives (where elected), must identify, assess and control risks associated with working at heights to prevent or minimise risk of injury.
- Individuals must not work at heights unless it is discussed with the principal or their delegate as being a part of their role.

- School staff and volunteers who have discussed with their principal working at heights as part of their role must complete the competency based [Work safely at heights training course \(RIIWHHS204E\)](#), complete the refresher course every 2 years, and complete a [Safe Work Method Statement \(SWMS\)](#) prior to commencement of work at height.
- Principals or their delegates must review, sign and record SWMSs submitted by individuals undertaking work at heights.
- Individuals who are not specifically trained to work at heights must not undertake work at a height of more than 2 metres in any circumstance.

## Details

Working at heights means working in any place where there is a risk of falling more than 2 metres, including working above a hole, trench or pit. The risk of serious injury from this height is much greater than falls from less than 2 metres.

For work required to be completed at height, schools are encouraged to engage a contractor to complete this work, where possible. Contractors must provide the principal or their delegate with a Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) before commencing any tasks requiring working at heights (a new SWMS is required for each time they complete a task at height). Template and example SWMS are available in the [Resources tab](#). For further guidance on SWMS see section 2.4 of this policy 'Safe Work Method Statements'.

School staff and volunteers are not permitted to work at heights unless they meet all of the following conditions:

- they have discussed working at heights as being a part of their role with the principal or their delegate
- they are appropriately qualified (that is, have successfully completed, at a minimum, the competency-based [Work safely at heights training course \(RIIWHHS204E\)](#) and the refresher course every 2 years. These courses are searchable online, using the RIIWHHS204E code, and are delivered through registered training organisations (RTOs)
- they provide the principal or their delegate with a SWMS before commencing any tasks requiring working at heights (a new SWMS is required for each time they complete a task at height).

This policy should be read in conjunction with the [Contractor OHS Management](#) and [Volunteer OHS Management](#) policies, whenever contractors or volunteers are engaged to undertake a task that involves working at heights.

Individuals who are not specifically trained to work at heights must not undertake work at a height of more than 2 metres in any circumstance.

Casual relief teachers employed by a third-party agencies must never work at a height of more than 2 metres in any circumstance.

This policy does not cover situations that involve working 2 metres or less in height from the ground. Refer to the [Slips, Trips and Falls Prevention policy](#) for this information.

For excursion or camp activities involving working at heights (such as rock climbing), schools must refer to the relevant guidelines and requirements outlined in the department's [Excursions policy](#).

This policy does not cover maintenance tasks for building and grounds including roofing, gutter systems, anchor points or fall arrest systems, schools must refer to the relevant guidelines and requirements outlined in the [Buildings and Grounds Maintenance and Compliance policy](#).

## **Roles and responsibilities for the ongoing management of prevention of falls when working at heights**

### **Department roles and responsibilities**

The department must maintain, so far as is reasonably practicable, a safe and healthy working environment for school staff to avoid injuries from working at heights.

### **Principal or delegate roles and responsibilities**

The principal or their delegate must:

- identify, assess and control the risks that are associated with working at heights in consultation with individuals who are or are likely to be affected and health and safety representatives (HSR), where elected
- ensure school staff and volunteers who are required to work at heights as part of their role complete the competency-based work safely at heights training course

(RIIWHS204E) and refresher course every 2 years, prior to the commencement of any tasks requiring working at heights

- review and sign off (to confirm sighting) all SWMS completed by school staff, contractors and volunteers before any work from height task commences, and retain copies
- ensure training records for school staff and volunteers are retained – refer to the [OHS Induction and Training policy](#) and [Volunteer OHS Management policy](#).

## School staff roles and responsibilities

School staff, including volunteers, must:

- take reasonable care for their own health and safety and the safety of others who may be affected by their actions or omissions while at work, which includes assisting principals or their delegate to prevent, identify and manage hazards and risks associated with working at heights
- not work at heights unless their role specifically requires them to do so, as discussed with their principal or delegate
- where their role specifically requires working from heights:
  - ensure they are appropriately trained in the competency-based work safely at heights training course (RIIWHS204E) prior to commencing any tasks at height
  - complete the associated work safely at heights refresher course every 2 years
  - provide a SWMS prior to commencing work at heights – the SWMS must be signed by the principal or their delegate to verify it has been sighted
- report hazards, risks, incidents and near misses in the workplace using [eduSafe Plus](#).

## Department supports for schools

Central and regional offices provide a range of supports and services to assist principals and employees to be safe and well, including access to the [OHS Advisory Service and Statewide OHS Services Team](#) who can provide free advice in relation to managing risks associated with working at height tasks.

Using [eduSafe Plus](#) to report and manage hazards identified allows OHS service officers to provide assistance and advice. Guidance for reporting and managing hazards on eduSafe

Plus is located in the [How to report a workplace hazard guide \(PDF\)](#) (staff login required) on the knowledge base in eduSafe Plus.

## Definitions

### **Fall arrest system**

Equipment or material, or a combination of equipment and material, that is designed to arrest the fall of a person. These can include industrial safety nets, catch platforms or safety harness systems (other than a travel restraint system).

### **Risk assessment**

Process undertaken to identify the hazards, risk controls, and level of risk associated with a task or activity.

### **Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS)**

A document that describes the high-risk work being performed, the health and safety risks associated with the work and the risk control measures that will be applied to ensure the work is carried out in a safe manner.

### **Safe work procedure**

A step-by-step documented procedure on how to safely conduct a task or operation on an item or piece of equipment.

### **Travel restraint system**

Equipment that is worn by, or attached to, a person and is designed for the purpose of physically restraining the person from reaching an edge or elevated surface from which the person may fall.

### **Working at heights**

Undertaking a task at a height of more than 2 metres (measured from the soles of feet to the ground). This also applies in situations where a person may fall more than 2 metres into a hole, trench or pit.

## Related policies

- [Contractor OHS Management](#)
- [Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Management in Schools](#)
- [OHS Induction and Training](#)

- [OHS Risk Planning and Management](#)
- [Records Management – School Records](#)
- [Volunteer OHS Management](#)

## Related legislation

- [Model Code of Practice: Managing the Risk of Falls at Workplaces \(Aus\) \(PDF\)](#)
- [Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017 \(Vic\)](#)

## Policy Review And Approval

Policy last reviewed	August 2024
Approved by	School Principal: Scott McCumber
Next scheduled review date	August 2025