

LOW-LEVEL FALL RISK IN THE WORKPLACE

Often we consider work at height done at two metres or higher as a low-risk activity. Typically, we think to ourselves, "I am just quickly installing the light" or, "I am just quickly fixing the sticky window". Because of this mindset, we and our employers are less likely to take proactive preventative steps to avoid an incident. Statistically, most work-at-height incidents occur at heights lower than six metres above a surface area. For example, in the UK someone is injured involving the use of a ladder every 11 minutes. A fall from height can cause life-changing injury and, in some cases, can even be fatal (*Latest Telescopic Ladder Research Report Launched, The Ladder Association, 2024*).

Low-level fall risks refer to potential hazards or dangers associated with falling from relatively low heights, typically less than six metres. While falls from low levels may not result in severe injuries compared to falls from greater heights, they can still cause significant harm, including fractures, sprains and bruises. It is essential to identify and mitigate these risks to ensure a safe working environment.



Common low-level fall risks include:

- Trips and slips: Uneven surfaces, loose cables, cluttered walkways and slippery floors can cause individuals to trip or slip and fall.
- Stepladders and step stools: Improper use of stepladders and step stools, such as standing on the top rung or placing the stool or ladder on an unstable surface, can lead to falls.
- Working platforms: Working on platforms, such as raised platforms or elevated surfaces, without proper guardrails or fall protection measures increases the risk of falls.
- Working near open edges (single-storey roofs): Working near open edges, ledges or unprotected floor openings without barriers or guardrails poses a fall hazard.
- Fragile surfaces (single-storey roofs): Working near a fragile surface without barriers or guardrails poses a hazard of someone falling through a fragile surface.
- Self-made bridges over deep trenches, or inadequate covers for deep holes (anything up to 6 m for the purpose of this document).
- Use of chairs or tables: Standing on chairs, tables or other makeshift platforms, instead of using appropriate equipment for elevation, increases the risk of falls.
- Employees and workers who are aware of potential risks and who do not warn other people who are exposing themselves to the potential risk.
- Improper footwear: Wearing inappropriate footwear for the task at hand, such as shoes with worn-out treads or high heels, can contribute to slips and falls.



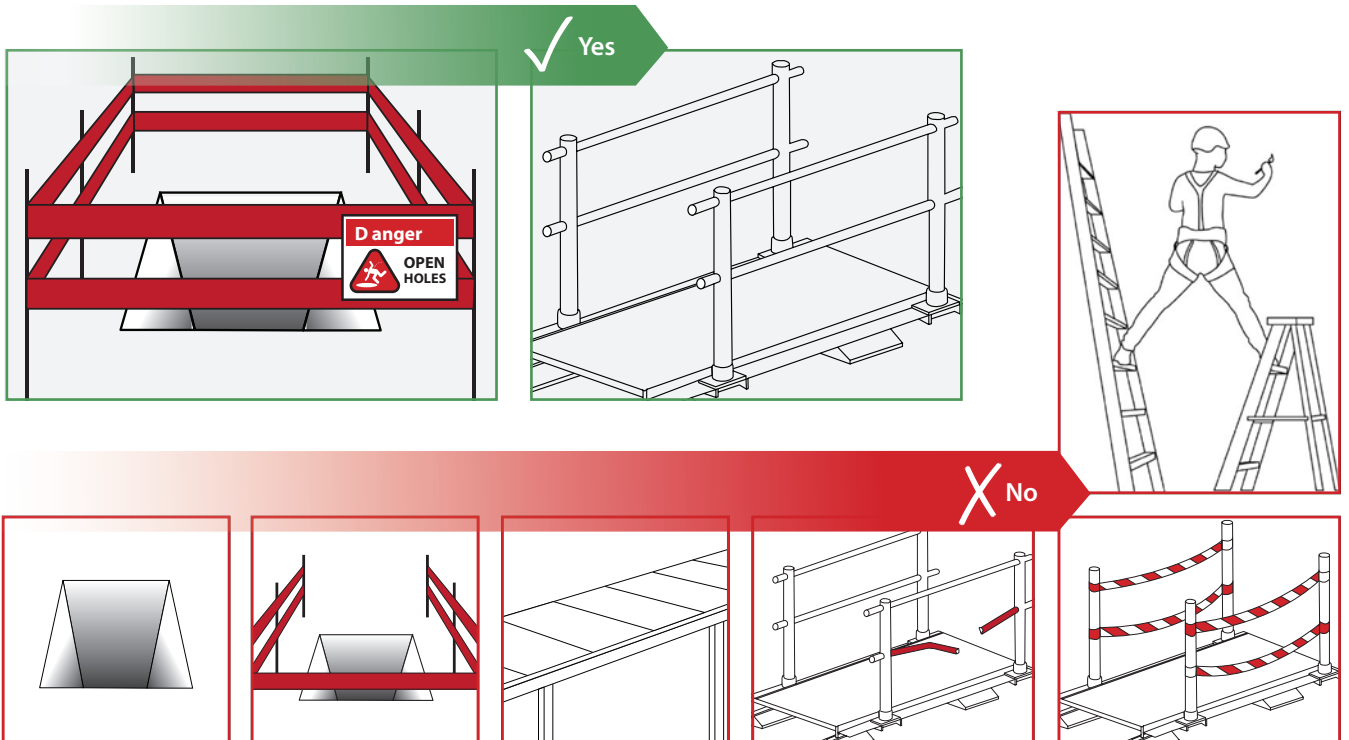
LOW-LEVEL FALL RISK IN THE WORKPLACE

To mitigate low-level fall risks, employers and workers should:

- Conduct regular risk assessments to identify hazards and implement appropriate control measures.
- Provide proper training on fall prevention, including safe work practices and the correct use of equipment.
- Install adequate barricading around low-level fall risk zones (such as open manholes, formwork, entrances to incomplete stairways and so on).
- Encourage "buddy checks" where fellow workers remind one another that they are going to expose themselves to a fall risk if they perform work close to an edge, open hole, trench, fragile surface and so on.
- Maintain a clean and clutter-free work environment to reduce tripping hazards.
- Ensure that all equipment and surfaces are in good condition and meet safety standards
- Place adequate warning signs where persons may be exposed to a fall risk.
- Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), such as non-slip footwear and fall arrest systems, when necessary.
- Encourage open communication and reporting of hazards or near misses to address issues promptly.

By proactively addressing low-level fall risks, organisations can create a safer workplace and prevent accidents and injuries.

APRIL 2024 - STAY SAFE



BE PROACTIVE; BE PREPARED!