TOOLBOX TALK AWARENESS PACKAGES

HAZ-HGT · Working at Heights Awareness

Product Overview

Audience: All workers · Duration: 20–30 minutes

Version 1.0 · 8 November 2026

For workers who use ladders, platforms, roofs or anything off the ground: why falls kill, and the order of controls that prevents them.

Falls from height are one of the most common causes of serious injury and death at work in Australia, and many happen from low heights, from ladders, trucks and roofs. A fall does not need to be from a great height to be fatal.

This talk covers the hierarchy of control for falls, from doing the work on the ground to edge protection, platforms and fall arrest, with practical rules for ladders and fragile surfaces. It is awareness, not harness or elevating work platform training.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Explain why falls are a leading cause of death and serious injury at work, including falls from low heights
- Apply the hierarchy of control for falls: work on the ground, a solid construction with edge protection, a fall prevention device, a work positioning system, then fall arrest
- Use ladders safely: the right ladder for the job, set up and secured, three points of contact, and knowing when a ladder is the wrong choice
- Recognise fragile surfaces, skylights, penetrations and unprotected edges
- Explain that a fall arrest harness needs training, inspection, a suitable anchor and a rescue plan
- Describe the extra requirements for construction work where a person could fall more than two metres, and that Victoria's rules take a different form
- Stop and report when the controls for work at height are not in place

What it covers

Module	Covers
Why falls matter	Falls from low heights; Common scenarios: ladders, roofs, trucks, mezzanines; Duties under WHS or OHS laws
The hierarchy of control for falls	Do it on the ground; Edge protection, scaffolds and platforms; Work positioning and fall arrest; Rescue plans
Ladders and surfaces	Choosing and setting up a ladder; Three points of contact; Fragile roofs, skylights and penetrations; Falling objects below
Your part	Checking before you climb; Never modifying or bypassing edge protection; Stopping the job and reporting

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Activities

- Choose the control: workers rank options for four height tasks, from changing a light to working on a roof, and explain their choices
- Ladder check: a ladder inspection and set-up walk-through using the handout checklist

What is in the package

Item	File
Editable PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes, plus PDF	02_TRAINING_PRESENTATION/Training Presentation.pptx and .pdf
Facilitator guide with a running sheet, discussion prompts and model answers	03_FACILITATOR_GUIDE/Facilitator Guide.docx and .pdf
Participant handout with the key points to take away	04_PARTICIPANT_HANDOUT/Participant Handout.docx and .pdf
Attendance record form, to capture who attended, when, and who facilitated	06_RECORDS/Attendance Record.docx and .pdf
Excel attendance register	06_RECORDS/Attendance Register.xlsx
Multiple-choice theory assessment, to record understanding if your business wants to	05_ASSESSMENT/Theory Assessment.docx and .pdf
Answer key for the assessment	05_ASSESSMENT/Assessment Answer Key.docx and .pdf
Certificate template	06_RECORDS/Certificate Template.docx
Start here: Read Me First, Product Overview, Permitted Use Terms, Version Information	01_START_HERE/ (four PDFs)

What you need to deliver it

- A facilitator such as a supervisor, leading hand or WHS adviser who has read the facilitator guide and knows your site's arrangements for the topic
- A screen or projector, or printed slides or handouts: it works in a crib room, site office or on a video call
- Your own site procedures for the topic, to point to during the session

Questions

Does this train workers to use a harness? No. It explains when fall arrest is used and what it needs. Workers who use a harness or an elevating work platform need specific training and, for some equipment, a licence.

Can we add our own site procedures and photos? Yes. The slides, handout and guide are editable, and the facilitator guide marks the places to add your own procedures, contacts and photos of your workplace.

Do we have to use the assessment? No. It is there if your business wants a record that each worker understood the key points. The attendance record on its own shows who attended and when.

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TOOLBOX TALK

Working at Heights Awareness

Why falls kill, and the order of controls that prevents them

20–30 minutes · All workers

[Company name] · [Date] · [Facilitator name]

HGT

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What this talk is, and is not

This talk covers

- ✓ Why falls hurt and kill, even from low heights
- ✓ The order of controls for work at height
- ✓ Ladders, fragile surfaces and falling objects
- ✓ Your part: check, stop and report

This talk is not

- ✕ Harness or fall arrest training
- ✕ Elevating work platform training, or a licence
- ✕ Scaffolding training, or a licence
- ✕ Our procedure: **[Your working at heights procedure]**

Awareness only. Using a harness or an elevating work platform, or erecting scaffolding, needs specific training, and for some equipment a high risk work licence.

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Why falls matter

Falls from height are one of the most common causes of death and serious injury at work in Australia. Many happen from low heights.

- A fall of two metres or less can kill: a ladder, a truck tray, a loading dock, a mezzanine edge
- Most falls happen on short, routine jobs: 'it'll only take a minute'
- Common scenarios: ladders, roofs and skylights, trucks and trailers, mezzanines and racking, holes and pits

A composite example

- Osman is stacking cartons on a warehouse mezzanine. The gate in the guardrail has been propped open for a delivery. He steps back to check a label and falls 2.4 metres to the concrete.
- Nobody planned for a fall. It was a routine job.

Height is not the test. Any fall can kill.

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Duties under WHS or OHS laws

The business must

- Manage the risk of falls: eliminate it, or minimise it using the order of controls
- Provide safe access, edge protection, platforms and equipment, and maintain them
- Train and supervise workers, and plan rescue where fall arrest is used
- Consult workers on how work at height is done

You must

- Use the edge protection, platforms and equipment provided
- Never remove, modify or bypass edge protection
- Follow the procedure and the SWMS for the job
- Report hazards and missing controls, and stop if it is unsafe

Construction work where a person could fall more than 2 metres needs a SWMS before it starts. Victoria's rules take a different form.

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The order of controls for falls

1 **Work on the ground** Long-handled tools, lower it down, build it on the ground

2 **A solid construction** A floor or platform with edge protection and safe access

3 **A fall prevention device** Guardrails, scaffolds, elevating work platforms, hole covers

4 **Work positioning** Travel restraint that stops you reaching the edge; rope access

5 **Fall arrest** Harness, lanyard and anchor that catch you; needs a rescue plan

6 **Ladders and procedures** Short, simple, low-risk jobs only

HIGHER ORDER

Stop the fall, whoever is doing the job.

LOWER ORDER

Rely on the person, the equipment and training, every time.

Behaviours are not on the hierarchy, but behaviours and culture decide whether every control on it actually works.

Start at the top. Go down only when the step above is not reasonably practicable.

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Working at Heights Awareness

Participant handout · keep this

Falls from height kill and injure workers in Australia every year, and many happen from low heights. Keep this page.

The order of controls for falls

1. Work on the ground
2. A solid construction with edge protection
3. A fall prevention device: guardrails, scaffold, elevating work platform
4. A work positioning system
5. Fall arrest, with training, inspection, a rated anchor and a rescue plan
6. Ladders and procedures: short, simple jobs only

Duties

- The business provides the controls, training and supervision, and consults you
- You use the controls, never remove or bypass edge protection, and report what is missing
- Construction work where you could fall more than 2 metres needs a SWMS before it starts (Victoria's rules take a different form)

Using a ladder

- Three points of contact; face the ladder; belt buckle between the stiles
- Never above the highest step marked safe
- Both hands needed? Use a platform, not a ladder

Fragile surfaces and falling objects

- Treat skylights, clear sheeting and old fibro as fragile
- Holes and penetrations covered, fixed and marked
- Exclusion zones below; toe boards and tool lanyards

Ladder check

- ☐ Label: industrial rated, for at least 120 kg
- ☐ Stiles straight: no cracks, dents, bends or corrosion
- ☐ Rungs or steps tight, clean and undamaged
- ☐ Feet in place, non-slip and not worn
- ☐ Locks, spreaders and hinges work; extension ropes sound
- ☐ No paint, tape or repairs hiding damage
- ☐ Ground firm and level; area clear, and barricaded if people pass
- ☐ Single or extension: 4 up to 1 out, about 1 metre above the landing, secured or footed
- ☐ Tall enough: you will not stand above the highest step marked safe
- ☐ Damaged? Tag it out of service and report it: **[How to tag out a damaged ladder here]**

Stop and report when

- Edge protection is missing, removed or damaged
- A hole or skylight is not covered
- Equipment is damaged, or there is no rescue plan
- Report to: **[Who to report to here]**

Height is not the test. If the controls are not there, stop and report it.

This is awareness training. It is not a licence, a ticket, a permit or a competency. It does not train you to use a harness or an elevating work platform, or to erect scaffolding.

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