

# Working at Heights

## Step-by-step – Preventing falls from heights on your farm

Discuss with your family and workers where you are likely to be working at heights on the farm and the reasons for doing so. This may require a walk around the various infrastructure on the farm. The focus will most likely be around the dairy, feeding system, yards, machinery and sheds. Many of the changes needed to eliminate or control the risks may be easy and inexpensive. In the longer-term it might mean choosing a safer option when infrastructure is replaced.

### 1. Getting started

#### Read through this information pack carefully

Complete the working at heights **Safety Self-Assessment** (traffic lights) page.

**Make a list** of things to do and **set a date** to have each thing completed in the **Action Plan**.

Read through the information quickly again.

Pick a topic to discuss with staff or family at your next **workplace meeting** (you should have at least one safety topic each meeting).

### 2. Assessing the risks around working at heights on your farm

Task someone with identifying all the locations where work is done at heights on the farm. Ask them to take pictures of each possible location.

Do a **risk assessment** of each location or structure using the Risk Assessment Guide.

### 3. Eliminating or controlling the risks

Identify ways of doing the task from ground level.

Make the necessary changes for **security**, so that unauthorised persons (including children) are prevented from entering locations where falls could occur.

Find out if you have **contractors** who are equipped and skilled to do the work at heights.

Have the necessary **structural changes** to each structure made by a competent person and buy any **gear needed** such as portable platforms or fall arrest systems, including harnesses.

Arrange the **training** needed and who will participate. Set up a record of induction and training.

Go through the arrangements you now have in place with staff or family at your next **workplace meeting**.

**Sleep well - job well done**

### Resources in this section

- › **Information** about working at heights on dairy farms and legal obligations.
- › **Safety Self-Assessment** for working at heights
- › **Risk Assessment Guide** template

Information and templates provided in this folder are also available at

[www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/farmsafety](http://www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/farmsafety).

You can edit the templates to suit your farm.

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Falls can occur wherever there is more than one level – for example when someone is on a structure, piece of machinery, set of rails or ladder above ground, or working at ground level beside an exposed edge such as a pit. Serious injuries and fatalities can occur from falls. In addition, people underneath may be at risk if tools, materials and equipment are not adequately secured.

By law the person conducting the business in any workplace where a fall from one level to another is a possibility has Work Health and Safety obligations to manage all hazards and risks arising.

On dairy farms, examples of work practices that could lead to serious falls from heights include:

- › Working on or near fragile surfaces such as badly rusted corrugated iron, cement sheeting or fibreglass roofs and skylights
- › Working on mezzanine floors
- › Climbing on rails and pipelines to service equipment in the dairy
- › Accessing feed heads, sensors and internal section of rotary dairies
- › Climbing over dairy yard fencing
- › Using inadequate vet platforms in rotary dairies or walkways adjacent to cattle loading ramps
- › Maintaining machinery such as windmills, feed mixers, big square balers, headers and seeders
- › Climbing fixed ladders on silos or tanks
- › The unsafe and illegal practice of working from the bucket on a front-end loader or tractor, or from a pallet lifted by a forklift.
- › Using unsecured ladders on slippery or uneven surfaces, or using ladders inappropriately, for example working above the recommended level or load rating
- › Working on an exposed edge – next to a pit, sump or ledge – e.g. a vehicle service pit
- › Exiting tractors the wrong way (there is a correct way by facing the tractor and using handrails)

Wherever possible, set up so that work can be done from ground level. For example have silos with remote ground opening lids and fumigation systems. Some easy changes can be made, like having long-handled brushes for cleaning windscreens on tractors, long handled globe removers and paint rollers.

**Work Health and Safety regulations require that you must assess and manage the risks with equipment and safe systems of work, for example:**



- › Identify reasonably foreseeable hazards that could give rise to the risk of falling.
- › Eliminate the need to work at heights wherever possible.
- › If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risk, minimise it by implementing control measures.
- › Review and revise risk control measures to ensure they are effective.
- › Consult, so far as is reasonably practicable, with workers who are (or are likely to be) directly affected by working at heights. By law, you are responsible for all people involved – your staff AND contractors.

Where work has to be done at heights, use solid constructions such as fixed (rather than portable) ladders and steps, or portable step platforms that conform to Australian standards. Ensure that fall prevention devices such as ladder cages and handrails are present and make sure that equipment is in good working order and used appropriately. If a ladder is above 6 metres e.g. grain silos, it requires a landing and cage or other falls protection system in place.

Never work alone when working at heights.

### Learn more



#### Managing the risk of falls at workplaces

Safe Work Australia Code of Practice:

[www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/swa/about/publications/pages/managing-risk-falls-cop](http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/swa/about/publications/pages/managing-risk-falls-cop)

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Always use purpose-built work platforms such as cherry pickers, or elevated work platforms and not inappropriate equipment such as front end loader buckets. Some powered work platforms may require licences. Rated and purpose built work lift boxes can only be used with specific industrial forklifts and not on the forks of a front end loader. A work lift box must be secured to the industrial fork lift truck when on the forks its use requires two licenced operators.

Scaffolding and harnesses should be used when constructing or maintaining roofs. Specialised training may be required for working at heights, particularly if using harnesses and fall arrest systems. (And remember a trained second person must be present and have a rescue plan in place in case of a fall to retrieve the person who has fallen).

It is important to ensure that unauthorised persons (including children) are prevented from accessing locations where falls could occur, for example by having guards or locked covers on fixed ladders.

Temporary holes, trenches or pits should be isolated with barriers.

When doing your risk assessments, also remember that some structures may be confined spaces and you should check for overhead power hazards too.

Where a fall-arrest system is used to control risk, emergency and rescue procedures must be established and tested to ensure they are effective. Workers must be provided with suitable and adequate information, instruction and training in relation to the emergency procedures.

As part of emergency procedures first aid equipment and facilities must be provided and workers must be trained to administer first aid or have access to persons who are trained in first aid.



### Learn more



#### Selection and use of portable ladders

[www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/forms-and-publications/forms-and-publications/prevention-of-falls-in-construction-ladders](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/forms-and-publications/forms-and-publications/prevention-of-falls-in-construction-ladders)

#### Work platforms and boxes used in conjunction with industrial fork lifts

[www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/SWA/about/Publications/Documents/863/Industrial-Lift-Trucks-General-Guide.pdf](http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/SWA/about/Publications/Documents/863/Industrial-Lift-Trucks-General-Guide.pdf)

#### Elevated work platforms

[www.safework.sa.gov.au/uploaded\\_files/sgElevatingWorkPlatforms.pdf](http://www.safework.sa.gov.au/uploaded_files/sgElevatingWorkPlatforms.pdf)

### Tips



1. Always use a platform rather than a ladder if the tools you are using require two hands.



2. **Portable ladders – use only as a last resort**  
When purchasing portable ladders ensure they are stamped with compliance to the Australian standard (AS 1892). Dispose of ladders that are not made to the standard with the suitable Industrial rating for the task to be performed.
3. Instruct staff in safe use of portable ladders, including positioning, securing, load limits and always maintaining three points of contact. Store ladders horizontally.
4. **Non-conductive ladders should be used for electrical work.**

### Tip



#### Fall arrest systems including harnesses

should only be used if other controls cannot be implemented or to support other controls. Professional safety advice should be sought on selection, installation, use, maintenance and storage of fall arrest systems including harnesses. Training in correct use must also be provided.