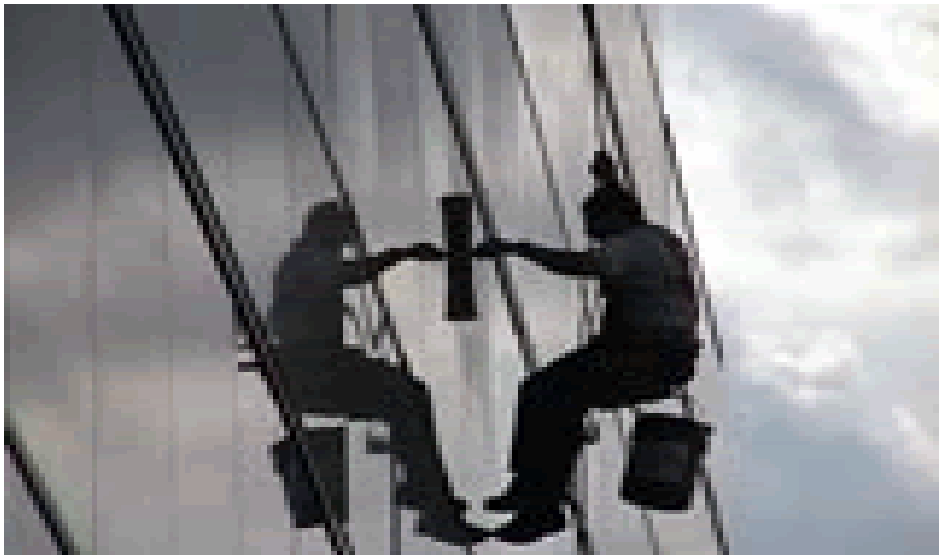


HEALTH AND SAFETY

IN

WINDOW CLEANING

MOYLE DISTRICT COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION

Window cleaning is a hazardous maintenance activity carried out on most work premises. Accident statistics reveal that the most common fatal accident is that of a cleaner falling from an external sill, ledge etc. due to loss of balance, breakage of the sill or failure of the hand-hold. Other fatalities have arisen from working on fragile roofs or the failure of access equipment. Falls from ladders account for a substantial proportion of injuries (arising from cleaners over reaching, over-extending the ladder or other improper working practices).

MAIN LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Regulation 16 of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations (NI) 1993 requires all windows and skylights to be so designed or constructed that they may be cleaned safely (and this can take into account equipment used in conjunction with the windows etc. or devices fitted to the building).

The **Approved Code of Practice** accompanying the Workplace Regulations states that suitable provision should be made so that windows and skylights can be cleaned safely if they cannot be cleaned from the ground or other suitable surface. Suitable provision includes:

(a) Fitting windows that can be cleaned safely from the inside;

(b) Fitting access equipment such as suspended cradles, or travelling ladders with an attachment for a safety harness;

(c) Providing suitable conditions for the future use of mobile access equipment, including ladders up to 9m long. Suitable conditions are:-

- Adequate access for the equipment
- A firm level surface in a safe place on which to stand the equipment
- Where a ladder over 6 metres long will be needed, suitable points for tying or fixing the ladder should be provided.

(d) Suitable and suitably placed anchorage points for safety harnesses.

Article 4 of the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order1978 (HASAWO 1978) places a duty on employers to ensure that places of work and systems of work are safe and without risks to health, so far as is reasonably practicable.

Article 5 of HASAWO 1978 places a duty on employers and self-employed persons to conduct their undertaking so that persons (not being employees) are not exposed to risks to their health or safety, so far as is reasonably practicable.

Article 6 of HASAWO 1978 places duties on persons having control of (work) premises to persons other than their employees to take such measures as it is reasonable for a person in his position to take to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the premises and all means of access and egress etc., are safe and without risks to health. Such a responsible person may be the freehold owner, the lessor, the tenant or the occupier depending on any contract or tenancy conditions.

There is obviously a need therefore for employers, self-employed persons and persons in control of premises to liaise and agree what precautions are necessary and ensure their implementation and maintenance.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

1. LADDERS

- Use at correct angle of 1:4 (horizontal:vertical)
- Firm, level base
- Footed where stability requires it or use of proprietary ladder stabilisers
- Above 6 metres to be tied to anchorage points in the exterior of the building
- Correct choice, storage and maintenance.

2. PERMANENT INSTALLATIONS

Suspended scaffolds/cradles

- May be manually or electrically powered
- A second (safety) rope must be provided at each suspension point
- Need to ensure safe means of access to and egress from the cradle
- Properly planned inspection and maintenance required
- Proper training of operatives (including the instruction that work is only carried out from the cradle)
  If power driven, then training and instruction of operatives should cover manufacturers instructions, any limitations on use, safety devices and fault/emergency procedures.

- Safety harnesses or belts should be used where appropriate as a precaution against the failure of a suspension rope; attachment should be to the safety rope, for example

3. OTHER SYSTEMS

These include chairs, power operated mobile work platforms, mobile tower scaffolds etc.

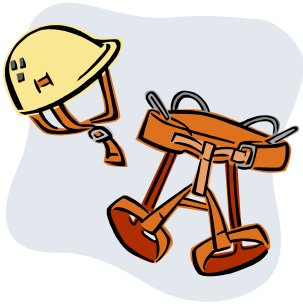
4. FALL ARREST SYSTEMS

There may be circumstances when it will not be reasonably practicable to use other means of access or to work from a safe place within the building. In such cases the use of a safety harness or belt attached to an anchorage point may be the only precaution that is reasonably practicable, all other methods having been first considered.

Anchorage points should be capable of sustaining the anticipated shock loads.

NB. Recommended maximum "free fall" distance of 2 metres (with safety harness) or 0.6 metres (with safety belt).

Safety eyebolts are the most widely used; they should be positioned so that the operative can attach their rope and harness/ belt before being at risk. Other types include a sliding anchorage, an inertia controlled reel, or other automatic fall arrest devices.



CHECKLIST – WINDOW CLEANING

1. Are you aware of the joint nature of responsibilities for the safety of window cleaning **YES NO**

2. Has window cleaning at your premises been covered in a risk assessment? **YES NO**

3. Do you take steps to ensure the (safety) competency of your window cleaners, where there is significant risk? **YES NO**

4. Do you provide and maintain suitable anchorage points or equipment/systems to ensure window cleaning can be carried out safely? **YES NO**

5. Do you maintain appropriate records of maintenance examination of window cleaning facilities? **YES NO**

CONTACT DETAILS

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Should you require further information on Health and Safety in Window Cleaning please contact your local Council or visit: www.hseni.gov.uk or www.hse.gov.uk