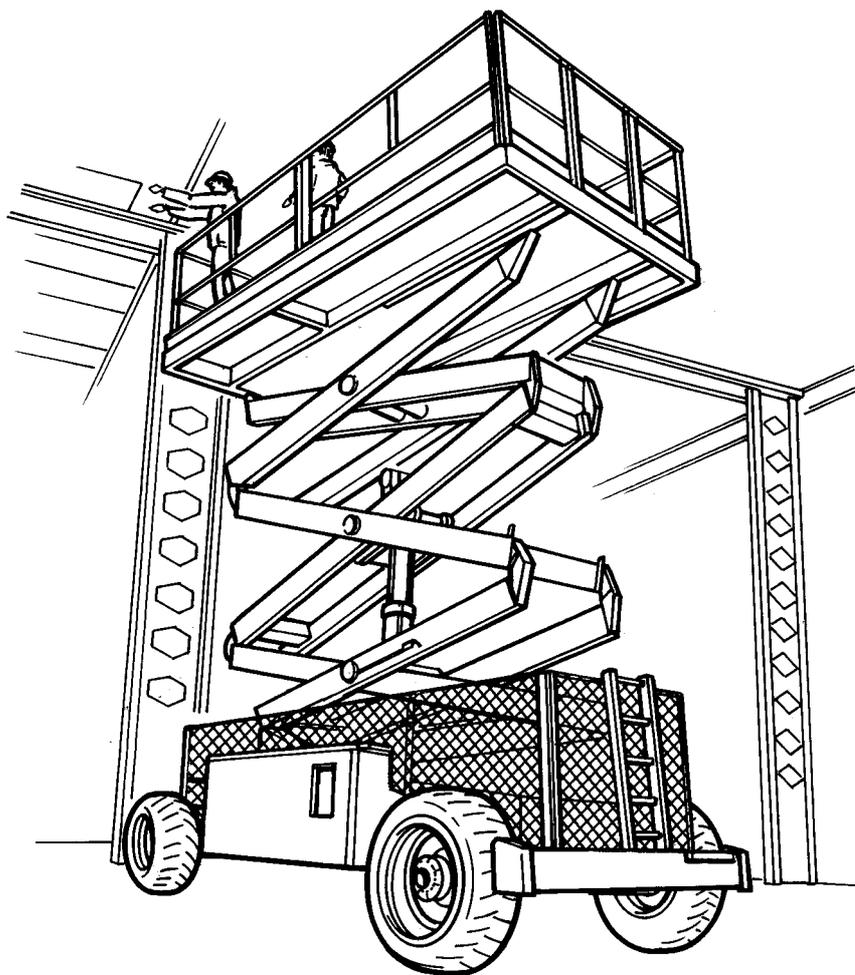


FACE THE FACTS:

Don't fall for bad access

About 15% of all major injury accidents at quarries result from people falling when working at height on fixed plant. Most accidents involving falls could have been prevented if the right equipment had been provided and properly used. All falls need to be prevented, however, and specific precautions need to be taken where it is possible to fall 2 m or more.



A wide range of MEWPs is available to provide access for almost any work at height.

What can be done to prevent these falls?

When planning work at heights, think about where the work is to be done. Obviously the first step will be to use any existing structure which will allow safe access and provide a safe working platform. Where this is not possible, an extra platform will be necessary. Remember that this may give access to dangerous parts of machinery and the necessary controls will have to be put in place. You should also consider any lifting and handling requirements you may have, to carry out the work you intend to do.

What are the main rules to follow if you have to work at height?

- Don't work at height unless it is essential; do the majority of the work at low level.
- Provide a secure platform which will:
 - support the weight of the personnel and equipment to be used.
 - be stable and not overturn. It may need to be tied to an existing structure and the gradient of the ground will need to be considered where mobile lifting platforms are used.
 - be footed on stable ground.
- Provide guard rails, barriers on open edges and holes or openings in the platform floor, edges of roofs and working areas.

I have to work at height, and need to do a risk assessment. What should I consider?

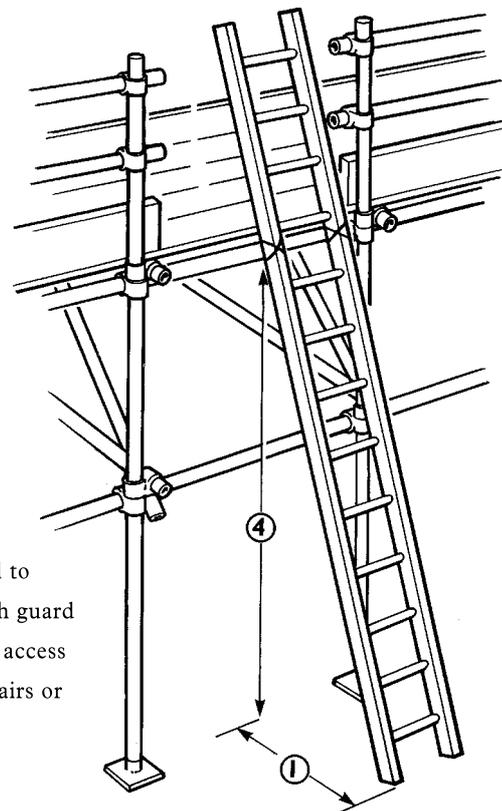
- Check that there is a safe method of getting to and from the work area.
- Decide what particular equipment will be suitable for the job and conditions on site.
- Make sure work platforms and any edges from which people are likely to fall have guard rails and toe boards or other barriers.
- Make sure that any equipment needed is available or delivered on site in good time and that the site has been prepared for it.
- Check that the equipment is in good condition and make sure that whoever puts the equipment together is trained and knows what they are doing.
- Make sure those who use the equipment are supervised so that they can use it properly. The more specialised the equipment (for example boatswain's chairs and rope access systems) the greater the degree of training and supervision required to ensure safety.
- Check any equipment provided by another company is safe before using it.
- Find out who to tell if any defects need to be remedied, or modifications need to be made, and keep them informed.

How do I know I have selected the best access system ?

There are many systems available, ranging from tower and general scaffold, mobile and suspended access equipment (cherry pickers), mobile elevating work platforms (MEWPs), boatswain's chairs, rope and harness systems

and ladders. If regular access is needed, modifications should be made to the plant structure to provide a safe working area. The choice of system will depend on the individual circumstances. The following sets out the priorities when choosing the system to be used:

- Only when it is not practical to provide a work platform with guard rails, should other means of access (for example boatswain's chairs or rope access) be used.
- Only where no other method is practicable, or when work platforms cannot comply with all the requirements for safe work (eg a guard rail has to be removed to land materials) should a way of arresting falls (for example a harness and lines) be relied upon.
- A harness or nets may also be needed to protect people when putting guard rails or other protection in place.
- Ladders are a means of access, not a working platform; they should only be used as workplaces for a short time, and then only when it is safe to do so. It is generally safer to use a tower scaffold or MEWP, even for short-term work.
- Remember to allow adequate clearance when equipment is used, particularly near overhead power lines; and around nearby structures when mobile equipment is being used.



This ladder is securely tied to prevent slipping. It is correctly angled (one out for every four up) and extends above the working platform to allow people to get on and off safely.

Guidance on safe working practices and the use of access equipment is available in *Health and safety in construction* (HSG150 ISBN 0 7176 1143 4 £7.95) from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 6FS. Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995.