

OCDEM, Churchill Hospital, Oxford OX3 7LE

**SOP number: OCDEM RA 5**

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## Working at Height Risk Assessment

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## Introduction

More than 4000 people a year in the UK suffer major injuries from falls while working at height and it is a major cause of workplace death. While the majority of these incidents occur in construction, other sectors of employment are also affected.

The Work at Height Regulations 2005 came into force on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2005 and supersede all previous regulations; they apply to all work at height where there is a risk of a fall liable to cause injury. The regulations were written to prevent deaths and injuries caused each year by falls at work.

Copies of University Policy Statement 'S3/11: The Work at Height Regulations 2005' can be downloaded from the University of Oxford Safety Office website in the Policy Statement folder: [Work at Height](#).

Guidelines can also be downloaded from the HSE website:  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg401.pdf>

## What is 'work at height'

A place is 'at height' if a person could be injured falling from it, even if it is at or below ground level.

'Work' includes moving around at a place of work (except by a staircase in a permanent workplace). For example using a kick stool to reach books in a library would be working at height.

## How does this affect work in OCDEM

In reality the only work that is likely to come under this legislation in OCDEM is the use of kick stools, step stools and step ladders to reach items that are stored at height. A step stool is a small step ladder of stool height typically with two steps and a seat; unlike a step ladder it does not have a safety rail.

For working at height procedures outside the scope of this risk assessment contact the OCDEM Safety Officer (Sandy Humphreys, ext: 57220) before undertaking the procedure.

## Things to consider

- Do you need to store items at height? Place as many items as possible, especially those that are used frequently, at a height that you can reach easily without over stretching.
- If you have to store items at height ensure you can place a kick stool or step ladder directly in front of the shelving or cupboard.
- Only place items you can easily handle at height; they must not be too heavy or bulky for you to lift.
- Do not step off of a kick stool or down a step ladder whilst carrying anything other than a small load. If you do not have a suitable surface to place your load on whilst still on the kick stool or ladder, ask someone to assist you by taking the load from you.
- Do not use a chair, stool, desk or bench to reach items at height.

## Checks to perform before using a kick stool or step ladder

### Location:

Before using a kick stool, step stool or step ladder, ensure the area is safe; check for things like cables, litter, boxes etc on the floor and whether the floor is wet.

Ensure it is placed on a firm level surface.

Ensure the kick stool, step stool or step ladder is of sufficient height for the job in hand.

### Equipment:

Ladders and steps must be of an appropriate classification, currently Class 1 (blue label), or Class EN131 (green label). Class III (red label) equipment is intended for light domestic use only and is not suitable for use at work. There are a number of standards, which relate to the ladder type e.g. BS 1129:1990 (timber ladders and steps), BS 2037:1994 (metal ladders and steps) and BS EN 131:1993 (timber and metal ladders and steps).

Ladders and steps must be in good condition and should not be painted as the paint may hide faults. Departments must regularly inspect ladders and steps under their control and records of these inspections must be kept. Users should check them before use to ensure that

#### With a kick stool check the following:

Is the non slip rubber mat intact on the top surface?

Do the castors lock when you stand on it so the kick stool cannot move? An easy and safe way to check this is to sit on it; your weight should take the stool over the castors and transfer the weight to the rubber base of the stool.

#### With a step stool or ladder check the following:

Are the steps free of mud, grease or anything else that might make them slippery?

Are the steps all there and intact? Check for things like cracks, warping and loose steps.

Are the rubber or plastic non-slip feet all in place?

Do the locking catches work properly?

Report any defects, or concerns about the equipment, to the OCDEM Safety Officer.

## Rules for using a kick stool or step ladder

- Wear sensible shoes, **never** use a step ladder when wearing loose fitting or high heeled shoes.
- Always have both feet on the kick stool, step stool or ladder, never have one foot on the stool/ladder and the other on another object such as a desk or bench.
- Never use a step stool or ladder in a closed position.
- Ensure the locking catches are properly engaged on a step ladder.
- Do not over reach.
- Always lift items from directly in front of you; do not twist to reach.
- Do not step on the seat of a step stool unless there is a means of support.
- Do not use the top step of a step ladder unless it has a safety rail.
- If you are using the safety rail of a step ladder for support always have the step ladder facing the items you are lifting.
- Always use the safety rail of a step ladder as a handhold whenever possible.

- Only Class 1 heavy duty step ladders should be used. Class 3 domestic ladders are not recommended for work.
- When closing a step stool or ladder keep your fingers clear of the inside surfaces to avoid pinching them.
- You must ensure anything thrown or tipped from height cannot injure anyone.
- Items must be stored in such a way that its movement cannot injure anyone.
- Return all kick stools and ladders to their storage location.

<b>Update History</b>				
<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Reason for update</b>	<b>Updated/reviewed by :</b>	<b>Date next review due</b>
1	10 Mar 2006	New SOP	Author: SMH	Mar 2008
1.1	28 Mar 2008	No changes	SMH	March 2010
2.0	Dec 2011	New University policy released – content updated in line with policy	SMH	Jan 2014
2.1	Jan 2014	New Header added	SMH	Jan 2016
2.2	29 Jan 2016	Head of department and TOC added - no other changes	SMH	Feb 2018