

METHOD STATEMENT · UNITED KINGDOM · 2026

Working at Height Method Statement

UK template and structure for a Work at Height Regulations 2005 method statement — hierarchy of control, edge protection, rescue plan.

A working at height method statement is the document that turns the Work at Height Regulations 2005 (WAHR) hierarchy of control into a sequenced description of how a specific task will be carried out. It is required for any work where a person could fall a distance liable to cause injury — there is no minimum height threshold in UK law. The document has to do three things: justify why fall arrest sits where it does in the hierarchy, describe the work itself in sequence, and include a rescue plan that is not 'call 999'.

Document structure a reviewer expects

- 1. Scope of work and location**
Address, structure, exact area of the height work, programme dates and shift pattern.
- 2. Sequence of operations**
Numbered steps describing what happens, in order, from arrival to demobilisation.
- 3. Hierarchy of control applied**
Document the WAHR reg 6 hierarchy and justify why each higher tier was rejected for this task.
- 4. Edge protection and collective measures**
Guardrails, toe-boards, nets, MEWP — specification, install method and sign-off.
- 5. PPE specification**
Harness model, lanyard energy absorber, anchor type (EN 795 class) and minimum kN rating.
- 6. Rescue plan**
Named method, named rescuer, equipment on site, maximum suspension-to-ground time.
- 7. Weather and exclusion criteria**
Wind speed cut-off (commonly 23 mph / 38 kph for MEWPs), lightning, surface conditions.
- 8. Competence and training records**
PASMA / IPAF / IRATA / harness inspection training — names, certificate numbers and expiry dates.
- 9. Briefing and sign-off**
Operatives sign to confirm the document has been briefed before work commences.

Common reasons reviewers reject this document

- Hierarchy of control not justified — document jumps straight to PPE fall arrest without explaining why collective measures were rejected.
- Rescue plan reads 'dial 999'. Reviewers expect a named on-site rescue method and a stated maximum suspension time.
- Anchor specification missing — 'a suitable anchor point' is not enough, the document has to name the EN 795 class and the kN rating.

- No exclusion criteria for wind speed, lightning or surface conditions.
- Generic site address — the method statement is reused across jobs without the site-specific access route, structure or programme.
- Operative competence (PASMA / IPAF / IRATA / harness inspection) referenced but no certificate numbers or expiry dates attached.

UK regulation reference

Work at Height Regulations 2005 SI 2005/735

The principal statutory instrument — the hierarchy of control and rescue planning duty live in regulations 4 and 6.
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2005/735/contents/made>

INDG401 — Work at height — A brief guide HSE INDG401

HSE's plain-English summary of the WAHR duties; commonly cited in tribunal cases.
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg401.htm>

CDM 2015 SI 2015/51

Imposes the duty to plan, manage and monitor construction work — the route by which the method statement enters the construction phase plan.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/51/contents/made>

L143 — Asbestos: Managing and working with asbestos HSE L143

Referenced where work at height interfaces with asbestos-containing materials (e.g. roof sheeting).

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l143.htm>

Frequently asked questions

Is there a minimum height that triggers a working at height method statement?

No. The Work at Height Regulations 2005 apply to any place where a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal injury. The HSE has confirmed there is no minimum — a fall from a kerb edge into a trench, or from the back of a wagon, both fall in scope. The trigger is the fall risk, not the height in metres.

Does a rescue plan have to be more than 'call 999'?

Yes. Regulation 4(1)(c) of WAHR requires that rescue is planned. The HSE position is that ambulance response times do not reliably meet the 15–30 minute window before suspension trauma becomes serious, so the plan must name an on-site rescue method, the equipment available, and the named person who will carry it out.

Do I need a method statement for MEWP work as well as a risk assessment?

Yes — for any task other than the most routine, the risk assessment alone is insufficient. The method statement describes the work sequence; the risk assessment scores the residual risk of each step. Principal contractors will almost always ask for both for MEWP work above 6m or near power lines.

Who can write a working at height method statement?

There is no licence requirement, but the author has to be 'competent' under WAHR reg 5 — meaning they have the skills, knowledge, training and experience to assess the risks of the specific task. For complex jobs (mast climbers, rope access, MEWPs near live cables) this is normally an IPAF / IRATA-certified supervisor or a chartered safety practitioner.

How often does a method statement need to be reviewed?

Whenever the work, the site, the equipment or the people change materially. In practice that means a re-issue per project, and a re-brief whenever the sequence changes on site. A method statement that hasn't been re-issued after a programme change is treated as void by most principal contractors.

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