



HILLINGDON

LONDON

Occupational Health & Safety - GREEN ALERT City Council Fined Following School Caretaker Fall from Ladder

Issue reference: OHS0145

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Applicable to all Headteachers/Managers

There have been around five previous safety alerts regarding working at height and nearly all of them from cases involving schools. These cases nearly always involve falls from around 2 metres. This safety alert serves as another reminder that a failure to properly plan work at height can have serious consequences.

The school caretaker was working at a community school and suffered a fatal head injury when he fell from the ladder.

He had been cleaning the roof of a bike shed at the school using a standard-length broom and a telescopic surface cleaner before falling approximately 2.5 metres onto the tarmacked surface below.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the City Council, the local authority that employs staff at the community school, had failed to ensure that the cleaning of the school's bike shed was properly planned, appropriately supervised, and carried out using a safe work method.

The City Council pleaded guilty to a breach of Regulation 4(1) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005. The council was fined £66,666 and ordered to pay £5,000.

The HSE Inspector said: "Falls from height remain one of the most common causes of work-related fatalities in this country and the risks associated with working at height are well-known. In this case, this tragic incident led to a man's avoidable death. This death could have been prevented if his employer had acted to plan and supervise the work activity and ensured a safe method of work was in place."

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Key actions required:

1. Wherever possible you should avoid the need for your staff to work at height. For example: using long handled tools or other equipment to work from ground level.
2. If staff are required to work at height:
 - a. Ensure a risk assessment is in place for the task. You can find a working at height risk assessment template in [Assure](#).
 - b. Ensure any equipment you provide is suitable for the task (ladders, stepladders, platforms etc) and where necessary prevents falls or minimises the distance/ consequences of a fall.
 - c. Ensure they have received all relevant training (procedures/equipment etc)
 - d. Ensure all equipment is regularly inspected and maintained
 - e. Ensure the work is adequately supervised to ensure they are working safely

Should you require any further information or support in implementing the requirements of this alert please contact your [Health & Safety Team](#)

Traffic light key	
Red alerts	Mandatory - where immediate action may be required
Amber alerts	Mandatory - with a timescale for action that may be required.
Green alerts	Information only