

# Height Safety News



**April 2015**

Dear << Test First Name >>

Welcome to the April 2015 Height Safety News. .. A little later than planned, sorry.

This month we bemoan the on-going predominance of falls and falling objects within general construction safety incidents. We ask when SG4:10 will be given a chance, and we look at Rope Access , are there limits ?



I follow a construction safety news feed from [PP Construction Safety](#)..... have done for years. It is a great way of keep up with a précis of events and getting a feel for the current big issues in Construction safety.

I am constantly amazed at the predominance of work at height and falling events within the news. I take the information weekly, and well over 50% of the events, on average, involve falls or falling materials. Often it is closer to 80%.

There are regular falls through fragile materials, scaffold failings, ladder and roof access issues, and falling equipment and materials. I wonder what that says about those who still think they can gamble with gravity.

I don't think prosecution is the only answer, nor do I think our workers are stupid .. I think they are simply trying their best to get things done, and without guidance they will gamble. I also don't think it is all about education, and a passion for competence cards.

I think it is often about giving the guys the confidence to contribute, and the time in which to do so ... What do you think ?



#### When will SG4:10 come into force ?

I visit top end principal contractor sites mostly, and in doing so I walk past many smaller projects. Almost all projects of any size have some scaffolding. I see many method statements describing the method of erection as "fully compliant with SG4:10" and I even see the odd hop up or step up lying around on site. Sadly what I do not see is scaffolding activity that complies with SG4:10 .. or that is even close. What I see, in the main, are scaffolding contractors doing what they have done for 20 years, with no change of work sequence, no review of their method of height access, and no safe zone.

The fundamental principle behind SG4:10 is to move the scaffolder's access method up the [work at height hierarchy](#). To reduce the dependence on PFPE (harness & lanyard solutions), and to engage fall prevention measures. It was published in October 2010, over four and a half years ago. So far it is regularly referenced by not followed.

Practical change is always hard. Changes in method impact productivity, and old habits are genuinely hard to break. Down stream there are productivity gains, opportunities to develop the workforce, and a chance to improve safety. Significant time and effort has been expended educating HSE, site managers, and scaffolding contractors.



#### Is Rope Access best ?

Rope access has become "the preferred" method of façade access for external building maintenance. This seems to be driven by a view that BMUs and permanent cradle rails are unsightly, supported by commercial pressures not to use up the most valuable floor plates within residential buildings, and to select the lowest capital cost solution. At what point does Rope Access become unreasonable ?

BS8560 asks us to consider the scale of the works, the duration, the frequency, any heavy materials, etc .. when deciding the most suitable method of access. It suggests that it is "desirable" to be guided by the work at height hierarchy.

I recently saw a 42 storey building, whose cladding was finished from the outside using Rope Access. This was reactive to the existing structure, and I believe that the finished building was to have a BMU for cleaning, inspection, and glass replacement. I regularly encounter 20+ storey new designs that have made specific Rope Access provision as the sole method of external envelope maintenance.

Rope Access is, personal fall prevention, and therefore at the third level within the [work at height hierarchy](#). It has a fantastic safety record, and there can be little doubt that the Rope Access technicians are focussed on their location at all times. .. but my question still stands. At what point does Rope

The tell tale sings of "non-compliance" are very easy to spot, and I thought that we had scaffolds inspected every week, by competent people ? When do you think we should grab the opportunity within SG4:10 ?

Access become an unreasonable method for regular, repeated, extended duration, at extreme height, when there is an established, collective, well proven technical alternative .. and there are also Robotics ?

Due to high demand, [Higher Safety](#) are looking for operative trainers, with a established knowledge of work at height, and a clear and engaging communication style. Applicants must be prepared to invest training time to learn both general and product specific delivery, and they must be able to throw small round chocolates straight. If interested, apply through the website [contact page](#).

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