



SAFETY ALERT

Subject: Working at Height – Safety in ceiling and roof voids.

Number: 04/14

DIO ODC Sponsor: Sean McGovern

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Contact if different from above Sponsor:

AH Policy & Assurance
Defence Infrastructure Organisation
Kingston Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B75 7RL

Telephone: 0121 311 3228 Email: DIO Sec-SftyAH@mod.uk

Who Should Read this: Top Level Budget Holders, Prime Contractors, Private Finance Initiatives, Public, Private Partnership and other traditionally procured contracts, Project Managers, Site Estate Authority Teams and Property Managers with responsibility for MOD projects and Property Management Works Services (including the legacy work of EWCs/WSMs), Coordinating Authorising Engineers, Authorising Engineers W@H, Authorised Persons W@H.

When it takes effect: immediately

When it is due to expire: When updated or rescinded.

Aim

1. The aim of this Safety Alert is to draw to the attention of those commissioning works and/or undertaking maintenance, carrying out inspections in ceiling and roof voids of the need to ensure that adequate arrangements are in place to prevent persons falling through fragile ceilings. This Safety Alert supersedes SA03/14 which is now cancelled and withdrawn

Introduction.

2. Compliance with the contents of this Alert will enable compliance with the Health & Safety At Work Etc Act 1974 and its subordinate Regulations.
3. The appropriate MOD officer shall arrange for the Maintenance Management Organisation (MMO) contractor to carry out all actions in accordance with this Alert.
4. Any work required as a result of this Safety Alert must be carried out in accordance with JSP 375 Volume 3 – MOD's Safety Rules & Procedures.
5. On MOD Establishments occupied by United States Visiting Forces (USVF) responsibility is jointly held by USVF and DIO (USF). At base level this jointly managed organisation is to take appropriate action to implement the contents of this Alert. Where this Alert contains procedures which differ significantly from USVF practice, DIO (USF) code of practice will be issued.

Requirement

6. Access to ceiling and roof voids is to be strictly controlled.
7. Gantries and walkways are to be regarded as places of working at height whether within or external to buildings; and in accordance with JSP 375 Volume 3 Chapter 7 (clauses 3.4.2 & 3.4.3), each is to be risk assessed to determine if they should be classified as Restricted High Places.
8. Prior to any work being carried out in ceiling and roof voids, a thorough evaluation of the risks involved and preventative measures necessary is to be undertaken. The evaluation of risks should include all risks in addition to the work at height risks, these could include, potential confined space working, hazardous materials, heat or cold, lack of ventilation, interface with building services installations etc
9. Gantries/walkways that do not have handrails or other fall prevention equipment in compliance with the Working at Height Regulations must not be used.
10. Where access is required for essential works which are needed for business continuity, full assessment of the risks involved in the work activity is to be undertaken and alternative compliant access arrangements are to be put in place.
11. Restricted working above false ceilings will remain in place until walkways / gantries have been either modified or removed.

Background

12. An investigation into an accident involving a contractor's employee who slipped and fell 3.7m has identified that inadequate fall prevention measures in place on the access gantries/walkways at the time of the incident.
13. The HSE inspector who carried out the investigation also noted that there were other similar access gantries/walkways in the ceiling void which were not fitted with handrails or other fall prevention equipment.