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WORKING SAFELY
AT HEIGHT TOOLKIT

Factsheet



Edge protection



What do I need to know about edge protection?

Edge protection is used to prevent people, tools, and materials from falling:

- around the perimeters of a work area
- around openings
- where brittle material cannot safely support the weight of a person.

Edge protection comes in different forms:

- a proprietary system, that is a system “bought off the shelf”
- scaffolding that supports a temporary edge protection system
- timber to form a guardrail and/or physical barrier

Edge protection is the preferred control for preventing falls from roofs on single-storey buildings because it isolates multiple workers from the risk of a fall.

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment’s Position Paper on

Working at Height says where the hazard of working at height cannot be eliminated, some form of edge protection should be used to isolate workers from a fall. This includes single-storey buildings and structures.

If this is not practicable then the use of scaffolding, mobile elevating work platforms or temporary work platforms are more acceptable alternatives.



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How do I use edge protection?

Plan ahead

Plan for when you will need edge protection. Sourcing and erecting edge protection may take time.

Install edge protection as early as possible on a job so multiple groups of contractors, sub-contractors and workers can use it throughout the project, for example builders, electrical workers, and roofers.

Installing edge protection

Erect, use, and maintain edge protection according to manufacturer's instruction or design specifications.

Think about and manage how the edge protection will be erected, as people may be exposed to the hazards of working at height during its installation (See Factsheet 3: Short duration work at height).

Guardrails

Fit edge protection with a top rail, mid rail and toe board or bottom rail.

Specifically ensure:

- top rail is no less than 900 mm above the point where a worker could stand adjacent to the edge protection
- mid rails have a clear distance between rails that does not exceed 450 mm
- a clear distance between a mid rail and the toe board or bottom rail should not exceed 275 mm.

More information about the design and construction of guardrails for sloping surfaces may be found in standard *AS/NZS 4994 Temporary roof edge protection for housing and residential buildings*.

Inspecting edge protection

Inspect edge protection regularly, especially after a storm or other occurrence that could affect its ability to prevent falls.



Timber edge protection – construction and installation

Temporary timber guardrails are sometimes used for edge protection. Timber edge protection shall be constructed by a competent person and extreme caution is required to ensure the appropriateness of all materials used. Construction must take into account the forces that are likely to be applied to the edge protection as a result of the work undertaken.

Select the best work method to **eliminate**, **isolate** or **minimise** (in that order) the risk of the significant hazard.

Effort is in proportion to risk – the greater the risk, the greater the controls. Remember, **doing nothing is not an option**.

For further information, refer to the *SARNZ Best Practice Guidelines for Scaffolding in New Zealand: Section 6.14 Timber scaffolds*.



1. Eliminate



2. Isolate



3. Minimise

the risk of the
significant hazard