

Health and Safety Services
Safety Team
The University of Manchester
Waterloo Place,
180, Oxford Road,
Manchester M13 9GP

www.manchester.ac.uk

To Vice-President/Deans, Heads of Schools
From A McMenemy, Registrar and Secretary
Date November 2, 2006
cc President, Prof M Case, Dr J Brider, Dr S A Robson, Prof P Heggs, Dr M Taylor,
Ms K Heaton, Dr P Sponder, School Safety Advisors, Safety Representatives
Reference Circular 16/2006

Use of ladders & work at height.

I am taking the unusual step of writing to you personally about a particular Health and Safety issue because of the potential seriousness of this matter to individuals and to the University's reputation in terms of its duty of care to its staff and students.

You will already be aware that the use of ladders, step-ladders and work at height generally can be a high risk activity, and that falls from height can result in death or serious injury (Dr Taylor's safety circulars 12/2006, and 8/2005 refer). A serious incident occurred at the University on 23 June 2006 when a member of staff fell from a ladder, resulting in a life-changing injury.

This incident has been investigated internally, and by the Health & Safety Executive. The inspector has made it very clear in a letter to the President that prosecution of the University was considered, and that any further incidents of non-compliance will necessitate a "more robust HSE response". I understand this to mean that we have had a final warning, and any further incidents of non-compliance with health & safety legislation relevant to use of ladders / work at height will find the University, and possibly culpable individuals, in the Courts.

It is imperative, therefore, throughout the University, that risk assessments for work at height are properly carried out and key findings recorded. Work at height is construed widely to include work from ladders and step ladders, and work on roofs, scaffolds, mobile elevating work platforms, rope access, etc. **Obviously this is not limited to Estates' activities, and many Schools will have staff and students carrying out such work, on and off campus.** Risk assessments can be generic in nature, provided they identify the risks and ensure that those undertaking dynamic assessments are competent to do so. Training needs must be identified and provided, eg through STDU formal courses or more informally by "tool box" short talks.

The Health & Safety Services webpages contain guidance on risk assessments at <http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/healthandsafety/CoPs&Guidance.htm#R> and the HSE have a microsite on falls from height, at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/falls/index.htm>

Will all senior managers please ensure that this communication is widely circulated and that their own monitoring and inspection procedures specifically include work at height.

Further advice can be obtained from your University Safety Co-ordinator.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation.