



Taranaki Newsletter



We have to get out of the mind-set of saying, "No matter how hard we try, we will have accidents," and into "We will not have accidents."

November is normally the month when we start seeing Christmas decorations in the shops, indicating that the year is almost gone. The big rush has begun and emphasis needs to be placed on not allowing yourself or others to be put at risk because of increased workloads or desperate clients. A lot of **Short Duration Work** at height is carried out during this time as people ready themselves for the holidays, and you need to make sure you use the best controls possible under the circumstances.

There is this often quoted comment that no matter how hard you try to prevent an accident it will always happen. If you approach safety from a negative perspective there is a high probability that accidents will happen. It is not to say that if approached from a positive perspective that there will never be accidents. It simply means that if you are positive, and remain positive, you are in a better position to succeed than if you were negative, and this is true for anything we do in life.

Safety success is measured through what you do to decrease the likelihood of an accident or the consequences if an accident was to happen. You do this through identifying the hazard, assessing the risk, following the hierarchy of controls (**Eliminate - Isolate - Minimise**), and having a system in place to review and monitor.

Don't fall in to the trap of being negative when trying to implement a safety system that is designed to have a positive outcome. Remember that it is the likelihood and consequence of the accident you are managing, and normally an accident consists of multiple factors which come together to form one event. You should be working to understand these factors and guarding against them. A positive attitude, good safety systems, good communication and on-going management will make a significant difference.

What do you need to know?

Short duration work is work that can be **done in minutes** rather than hours, and in most cases is associated with maintenance tasks ([Factsheet](#)). The work can be completed **without compromising your body position** or the **system** (fall prevention control) you are using. Simply put another way, when doing short duration work at height you can do it **comfortably** and **effectively**, in a short time period, using an **adequate control**.

Only by effectively assessing the risks (**likelihood** and **consequence**) associated with the short duration work being done, will you be able to determine the controls required relative to the associated costs.

Remember that the greater the risk, the greater the controls need to be.

When there are a greater number of workers exposed at height for longer periods, or working with materials and tools that require greater effort, the controls should reflect the increased risk of a fall.

Short duration work controls will be to decrease the likelihood of an accident happening. You need to make sure that when using controls such as ladders, working platforms and harnesses that they are used correctly.

The biggest failures when using **ladders** is that they are not being used as per manufacturer specifications, and the work done off the ladder compromises the person's body position, the ladder, and the work.

Often laminated scaffolding planks being used as a **platform** are not being tested as per the SARNZ Best Practice Guidelines for Scaffolding in New Zealand and the Standard AS/NZS 4576:1995. The platforms are also not set up correctly and are not level.

Make sure that when **harnesses** are being used they are worn correctly, and contractors have been trained to use the harness effectively. NZQA unit standards we look for are:

- 23229: Use a safety harness for personal fall prevention when working at height
- 15757: Use install and disestablish propriety fall arrest system working at height

The unit standard will depend on the work being done, so make sure when arranging training with the provider that you are clear as to what work is being carried out.

Lastly, please be aware that when collecting measurements at height for the purpose of generating a quote you need to have controls in place. The consequences do not change, and **time is not an excuse for doing nothing.**