

Supervising window cleaning cradle work

QUESTION:

I would like to know a little bit more info regarding the safe use of a cradle for window cleaning work. Although training is done by the supplier/cradle owner apart from those working in the cradle do you require someone to stand near the cradle by the rail on the roofs for safety or by law whilst the cradle is in use? If so do they need any special type of training to stand there and watch to make sure the operatives are safe? Do you require any formal training in the manual lowering of a cradle? What are the emergency procedures for: Safe evacuation of stranded operatives; unconscious operatives; stranded after a fall (from cradle on fall arrest equipment/harness); and timescale for safe evacuation from cradle?

The above info I am unable to find and would like some help regarding these matters.

ANSWER:

Working at Height is governed by the Work at Height Regulations 2005 and when considering working at height from a cradle the Regulation goals should be applied to ensure that no-one is at risk of a fall liable to cause personal injury.

Good organisation, planning and appropriate supervision are essential. Planning must include planning for emergencies and rescue.

Addressing your specific points:

Supervision is required, and to be able to do this properly, the person undertaking the task must be knowledgeable in the activity and the correct way that this should be carried out.

Standing on the roof can only be from a place of safety, such that apart from the initial start up and lowering over the edge, any further work will most likely be out of sight of the roof.

The supervisor must not put himself in danger of a fall just to view what is going on. Perhaps viewing the work through the windows of lower floors is a safer and more revealing option, or by observing from the ground.

Certainly knowledge of correctly operating the system would be required, and attending the training course of operatives would provide this.

An emergency plan must be put in place for both stranded operatives in the cradle, conscious or unconscious, and for any faller out of the cradle. Rescue of persons must not rely on the emergency services.

For any person caught in a fall triggering harness suspension there is the further risk of harm if not safely rescued in the shortest possible time. Please see link to <http://www.hse.gov.uk/falls/harness.htm>

HSE also has guidance on the Falls web page under the "task" drop down for window cleaning which gives comprehensive advice, including use of a cradle, included in the term "suspended access equipment".

This has been drawn up in association with the Federation of Window Cleaners, Summerfield House, Harrogate Road, Reddish, Stockport, Cheshire SK5 6HQ Tel: 0161 432 8754

Please use the link below: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/falls/window.htm> scroll down to near bottom of page to "Further reading " and select pdf document Safety in window cleaning using suspended and powered access equipment[7] [PDF 30kb]

Information source HSE website: <http://webcommunities.hse.gov.uk/connect.ti/workheight/view?objectId=13971>