

Working at height

Introduction

Much lighting work, set building and set painting work, as well as general building maintenance, takes place at heights requiring access equipment

This policy is in line with HSE guidelines. We welcome any ideas that may help improve it.

Key principles

- No-one should be working in a situation they are not comfortable with – many people are uneasy using stepladders, ladders or other access equipment and they should not feel obliged or pressured into working in these situations
- No-one should ever work at height unless accompanied by another person
- When working from a stepladder or ladder one hand should always be used to hold on to the stepladder or ladder – you should not use both hands for working.
- All access equipment provided is regularly inspected to ensure it is in safe and serviceable condition. If any equipment is damaged or found to be in unsafe condition it should not be used and should be removed immediately, labelled clearly and not returned to its normal storage place. One of the Trustees should be informed without delay.

Use of access equipment

Fly rail and Fly rail access

The fly rail is accessed by a fixed vertical ladder and has a guard rail – however it remains a potentially hazardous place. Care must be taken ascending the ladder and moving under the guard rail onto the platform, and once on the platform there is still the potential to step off the edge of the platform. This area is for one person operating drop bars only.

Stepladders

Pool Bank Street, Nuneaton, CV11 5DB
www.abbeytheatre.co.uk

Stepladders should only be used on flat level surfaces, and should always be fully extended to allow the cross-links to lock fully. You should never stand on the top of a stepladder, the highest safe point is the top tread of the riser and this should only be used if close to a wall or other braced surface which the user can steady themselves against

A frame (combination) ladders

In A frame configuration these can be treated as high stepladders. Because of the additional height extra care should be taken, particularly to ensure users do not over-reach when working

Conventional ladders

A ladder should always be footed by a second person, to remove the risk of the base sliding. Ladders are marked with safe angles of use, and these should always be adhered to. Great care should be taken that the top of the ladder is properly seated against a suitable load-bearing surface (such as a wall or a secure scaffold tube forming part of the fixed lighting/rigging grid) – this is often difficult to see in the theatre environment but is absolutely critical for safety.

Access towers

Access towers require correct assembly, and this should only be done by experienced people. The theatre access tower has clear assembly instructions for cross-bracing etc. Care must be taken with the levelling screws on the feet to ensure the tower is vertical and stable. The wheels should always be locked before anyone climbs the tower. Corner outriggers should be used if the tower is built to full height or if there is any instability caused by the ground surface. After moving the tower to a new position it should be checked to ensure it is vertical and stable – very small changes in ground level can significantly affect this

Other access equipment

If other access equipment is hired in then this must first be approved by the Health and Safety Manager, who will ensure all use is by suitably trained and experienced personnel. Safety harnesses must be used where recommended

Platforms more than 2ft above ground level

Some stage set builds include areas more than 2ft above ground level. During set building these areas are particularly hazardous, as they won't have guard rails and may not be fully braced. Once built these must be separately risk assessed, with allowances for the lighting level when actors and crew are moving around and for the costume and abilities of the individual actors. This specific risk assessment forms part of the general show risk assessment which must be completed and submitted before any full rehearsal takes place

Pool Bank Street, Nuneaton, CV11 5DB
www.abbeytheatre.co.uk