

Toolbox Talk

Working Near Water

When working near water certain risks need to be taken into consideration and therefore precautions need to be put into place.

These precautions are:

- To prevent anyone entering the water.
- If someone enters the water, to ensure that they will float and are rescued in the shortest possible time.

It is essential, when working on or near water that safe systems of work are in place through risk assessments, Personal, Protective Equipment (if deemed necessary) and that everyone on site is properly instructed.

Main causes for entering the water:

- Slips trips and falls.
- Falls from height.
- Person being knocked over by moving object or person.
- Loss of balance.
- Failure or absence of edge barrier.
- Failure or absence of fall prevention equipment.
- Floating platforms or vessels sinking or incorrectly secured.

Precautions:

- Whenever reasonably practicable fixed edge protection must be provided to prevent people falling into water.
- Where edge barriers are not reasonably practicable at exposed edges, e.g. quay edges, appropriate warning signs and/or edge markings should be displayed to highlight the danger.
- Wearing of life jackets.
- Have throw lines/lifebuoys at the work site.
- Standby safety/rescue boat present as required.
- Ensure there is a suitable location to retrieve a person who has fallen into the water.

Key points:

- Lone working must be avoided at all times
- Appropriate risk assessments should be drawn up
- Is it possible to do the work away from water?



Possible Risks:

- Shock from sudden immersion in cold water.
- Weight of waterlogged clothing.
- Life jacket not being worn (or not inflating).
- Incapacity following injury – caused by striking an object during a fall, or whilst in the water.
- Fatigue or hypothermia where rescue is not immediate.

Use of Life Jackets:

- Check that the life jacket inspection is in date. Life jackets should be inspected every 2 years.
- If the life jacket self-inflates, check that the canister is in place and has the green window showing.
- Make sure you receive instruction on how to put the life jacket on.
- Make sure you tighten the straps for a good fit.