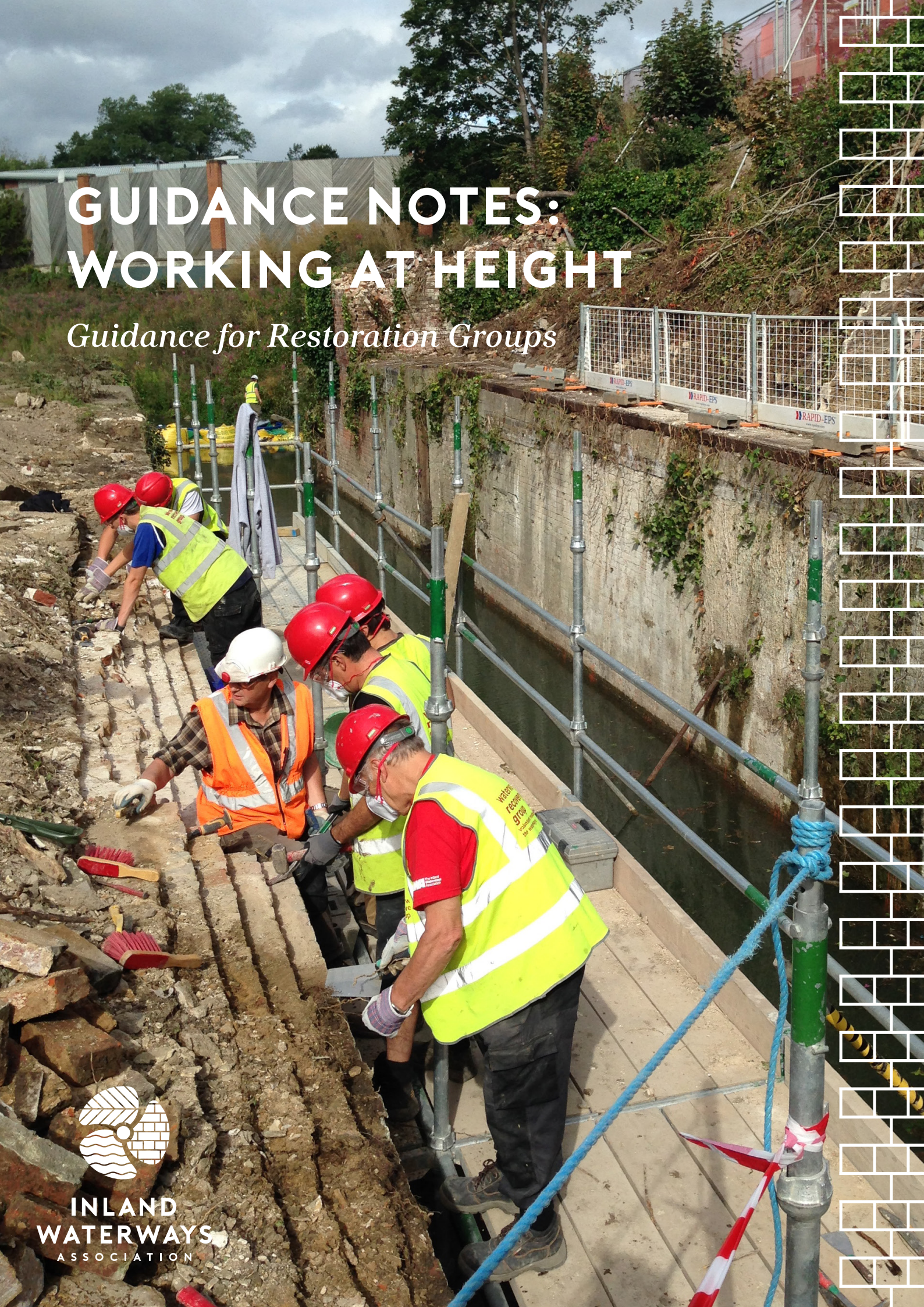
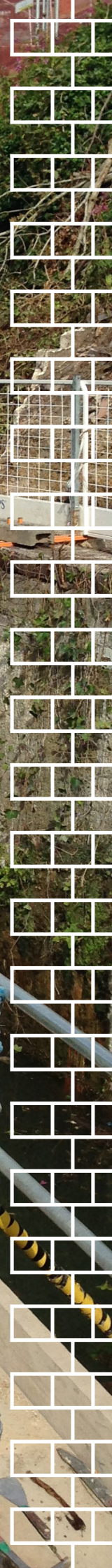


GUIDANCE NOTES: WORKING AT HEIGHT

Guidance for Restoration Groups



**INLAND
WATERWAYS**
ASSOCIATION



GUIDANCE NOTES: WORKING AT HEIGHT

INTRODUCTION

Falls from height are one of the biggest causes of workplace fatalities and major injuries across the construction industry. Common causes are falls from ladders and through fragile roofs; but we do not work from ladders or on fragile roofs, so is it an issue? The simple answer is yes, though it may not look like what you envisage working at height to be. Working at height can take many forms, such as working on a lock chamber or bridge to working on or near openings in the ground.

WHAT IS WORKING AT HEIGHT?

Work at height means work in any place where, if precautions were not taken, a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal injury. You are working at height if you:

- work above ground/floor level
- could fall from an edge, through an opening or fragile surface or
- could fall from ground level into an opening in a floor or a hole in the ground

Work at height does not include a slip or a trip on the level, as a fall from height has to involve a fall from one level to a lower level, nor does it include walking up and down a permanent staircase in a building.

ON A RESTORATION SITE

There are a number of areas whilst restoring canals that the possibility from working at height

is high and in many cases not very obvious at all. Here are examples of where you would expect to be working at height:

- Working at the top of an empty lock chamber
- Working on top of a bridge
- Working on an constructed towpath above the canal bed
- Working alongside an open excavation such as by-wash trench
- Anything involving ladders, scaffold, trestles or Mobile Elevated Platforms
- Climbing trees to assist with felling
- Standing in the skip of a dumper

1 Archaeological work to uncover canal heritage have areas where working at height is an issue due to the nature of the open excavations, even if it is only one foot deep it is still classified as working from height.

2 This partially restored lock chamber has the obvious drop from the coping into the lock chamber and from the top cill into the chamber, but the lockside area, which is partially rebuilt has many changes in the level and openings that are potential working at height areas.

3 During the rebuilding of a towpath wall, the work takes place from the bed of the canal, but the bricks are stored on the towpath. When the wall is rebuilt and the towpath is reinstated, there is a potential drop into the dry bed of the canal.

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CONSTRUCTION (DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT) REGULATIONS

The law (the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations) requires that employers and self-employed contractors (restoration groups and volunteer leaders) assess the risk from working at height and go on to organise and plan the work so it is carried out safely.

Employers and self-employed contractors must:

- Assess the risks;
- Decide on the precautions required;
- Record the significant findings; and
- Review the assessment as necessary.

Do not over complicate the process. On most restoration projects work at height risks will be well known with the necessary control measures in place or easy to apply.

KNOWING WHEN TO STOP!

If you are working at height and there are no safety measures put in place you need to STOP.

As with any hazard, the first consideration for reducing the risk should always be whether it can be eliminated altogether. This can be done through careful planning and preparation before you start work. This, however, is not always possible and therefore once the risks have been assessed you need to make sure the correct controls are in place to manage that risk.

Collective systems should always be considered before considering individual personal protective equipment (PPE) such as a full body harness.

Some examples of collective systems are:

- A simple fence erected a safe distance away from the top of the lock chamber
- Scaffold system and working platforms. Guard Rails must always be provided as well as Toe-Boards sufficient enough to stop people and materials falling.
- Always ensure that Scaffolds and working platforms are erected and checked by trained and competent personnel. No one should make alterations unless trained to do so.
- As said previously, if you are unsure about anything you must STOP.



DOS AND DON'TS OF WORKING AT HEIGHT

DO...

- As much work as possible from the ground
- Ensure workers can get safely to and from where they work at height
- Ensure equipment is suitable, stable and strong enough for the job, maintained and checked regularly
- Take precautions when working on or near fragile surfaces
- Provide protection from falling objects
- Consider emergency evacuation and rescue procedures
- Minimise the distance and consequences of a fall by using the right type of equipment; Where the risk cannot be eliminated, this may be the use of fall arrest bags, but be aware of their limitations

DON'T...

- Overload ladders – consider the equipment or materials workers are carrying before working at height. Check the pictogram or label on the ladder for information
- Overreach on ladders or stepladders
- Rest a ladder against weak upper surfaces, e.g. glazing or plastic gutters
- Use ladders or stepladders for strenuous or heavy tasks, only use them for light work of short duration (a maximum of 30 minutes at a time)
- Let anyone who is not competent (who doesn't have the skills, knowledge and experience to do the job) work at height

Volunteers have a general duty to take care of themselves and others who may be affected by their actions and to co-operate and use equipment provided for their safety.

Volunteers should;

- Report any safety hazard they identify
- Use the equipment and safety devices supplied to them properly, in accordance with any training and instructions.



USEFUL LINKS

- Working at Height Regulations
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2005/735/contents/made>
- Assessing Work at Height
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/safetytopics/assess.htm?ebul=gd-cons/apr14&cr=36#prec>
- HSE Working at Height
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/height.htm>