



# Wilkins Safety Group

**Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> September 2014**

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## *Welcome to our latest Update E-Newsletter*

As ever, please feel free to share this with friends and colleagues. You will also find PDF versions of all our other newsletters on our website: [www.wilkinssafety.co.uk](http://www.wilkinssafety.co.uk) with lots more useful information and a wealth of leaflets covering Health and Safety topics.



### **Working at Height and Slips, Trips and falls.**

Yes I know that I have covered this before, but when I can still visit a site, as I did last week, and take a photo like this I feel that the topic needs to be talked about again!

In construction the main cause of accidents is falls from height and in industry generally, the main cause is slips and trips.

So perhaps it is a topic you should consider daily in whatever career you are employed in.

### **This week's 2 recent HSE cases also look at accidents that could and should have been avoided.**

- **Ronald Steven King**, known as Steve, and two other men were seen on the roof of a detached house in Kingsley, Cheshire, without any measures in place to prevent them being injured in a fall.
- **Mr Sim** suffered fractures to his skull and right eye area as well as a vertebrae. He has since been advised that the bones in his skull and spine may never fully heal

We hope you learn from the mistakes of others that are highlighted in our weekly newsletters and, as a result, do not have similar accidents at your workplace.

As ever, if you have a subject that you would like us to cover one week, please contact us by phone [01458 253682](tel:01458253682)  
Email [info@wilkinssafety.co.uk](mailto:info@wilkinssafety.co.uk) or via our [Facebook page](#) or by [Twitter](#)

## ***Working at Height and Slips, Trips and falls.***

**Slips, trips and falls from height can all have serious consequences. Everyone can do more to ensure that their workplace becomes a safer environment. The effects of slips, trips and falls at work are far reaching, both for those involved, their families and the industries they work in. The cost to society alone is in the order of £800 million per year.**

The HSE have a program running at present on 'Slips, trips and falls' [also called the Shattered lives program]. Which looks at how such accidents can have a “Shattering” effect on people’s lives and the steps to be taken to prevent them. We will look at some of these as well as the legislation in place; such as

### ***Work at Height Regulations 2005***

**The Work at Height Regulations 2005** came into force on 6 April 2005. The Regulations apply to all work at height where there is a risk of a fall liable to cause personal injury.

They place duties on employers, the self-employed, and any person that controls the work of others (for example facilities managers or building owners who may contract others to work at height).

As part of the Regulations, duty holders must ensure:

- all work at height is properly planned and organised;
- those involved in work at height are competent;
- the risks from work at height are assessed and appropriate work equipment is selected and used;
- the risks from fragile surfaces are properly controlled; and
- Equipment for work at height is properly inspected and maintained.



There is a simple hierarchy for managing and selecting equipment for work at height. Duty holders must:

- avoid work at height where they can;
- use work equipment or other measures to prevent falls where they cannot avoid working at height; and
- Where they cannot eliminate the risk of a fall, use work equipment or other measures to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall should one occur.

The Regulations include schedules giving requirements for existing places of work and means of access for work at height, collective fall prevention (e.g. guardrails and working platforms), collective fall arrest (e.g. nets, airbags etc.), personal fall protection (e.g. work restraints, fall arrest and rope access) and ladders.

Key messages to duty holders are:

Those following good practice for work at height now should already be doing enough to comply with the Work at Height Regulations;

- Follow the risk assessments you have carried out for work at height activities and make sure all work at height is planned, organised and carried out by competent persons;
- Follow the hierarchy for managing risks from work at height - take steps to avoid, prevent or reduce risks; and
- Choose the right work equipment and select collective measures to prevent falls (such as guardrails and working platforms) before other measures which may only mitigate the distance and consequences of a fall (such as nets or airbags) or which may only provide personal protection from a fall.

**The Work at Height (Amendment) Regulations 2007** which came into force on 6 April 2007 apply to those who work at height providing instruction or leadership to one or more people engaged in caving or climbing by way of sport, recreation, team building or similar activities in Great Britain.

Ok so you don't work in construction but perhaps you work in:

## ***Health and Social Care***

**Here there are the risks of things such as, for example, wet and slippery floors.**

After monitoring health and safety records, bosses for one NHS Trust recognised they had problems with slips and trips on wet hospital floors.

Between 2002-2004 the Trust had to tackle in the region of 100 slips and trips from staff, all of which could be blamed on floors left wet after cleaning.

The Trust's safety adviser attended a slips, trips and falls workshop which reinforced the belief that more could and should be done. This prompted the Trust to look again at the areas where falls were occurring to identify trends.

Around the same time the Trust was unfortunate enough to have a member of staff fall in a ward area after the floor had been mopped.



An inspector from the Health and Safety Executive recommended that changing the way mopping was done could reduce the risk of slips and trips. He suggested using a dry mopping system using micro fibre, would limit the amount of fluid on the floor.

Micro fibre mops are designed to pick up dirt and cling to it. Rather than saturating the mops, the mops are placed into a bucket and left to soak up the water and cleaning fluid. This reduces the amount of residue that is left on the floor during and after mopping. The staff were also advised to mop and dry the floor in sections before moving onto the next part of the ward, to provide safe access around the area.

The Trust's safety advisor said: ***“At first the housekeeping staff were reluctant to change to a system that they believed would take much longer. However, once we started to see a decrease in the number of people slipping and how easy it was to implement, they were more than happy with the new way of working.”***

The Trust purchased 11 systems and trialled them for four weeks. The results were so dramatic they bought another six so they could roll the method out across all wards.

Since the Trust implemented the system in has had an 85% reduction in falls from the 100 reported in the previous two years.

## ***An office environment***

***“Well I work in a nice safe office environment and there's no risk of falling here is there?”***

Sadly there are too many slips, trips and falls in the office, all of which are avoidable. Have a look around your office and check:

- How good is the flooring? Are there damaged or worn areas of carpet? These often get overlooked or not given a high priority until somebody trips and seriously injures themselves.
- Cables across floors are another common occurrence in offices, especially if the building wasn't originally designed as an office. Or it was first used as an office before the introduction of so many electrical items and so extension leads are required.



- Are there boxes of old files etc. stacked on top of high shelves that occasionally need to be accessed? And, when they are required, is there a pair of stepladders available to get them down or do you just quickly use an office chair?



- Do you walk up or down the stairs with your hands and arms full of books and files? Slips and trips on stairs are a common cause of injuries at work, but there is no mandatory requirement to “hold the handrails”. However “common sense” would recommend that you at least keep one hand available to grab the handrail should you trip, slip or lose your balance.

## ***Using ladders or stepladders***

Ladders and stepladders are used by people in all sorts of business and some people have asked if they are now banned under Health & Safety Law. Well the answer is No they are not banned and can be used if they are the most appropriate means of access for the job in hand. However there are some sensible tips for using a ladder safely and these are listed below. The ladder should be:

- Prevented from slipping,
- Prevented from moving before it is stepped on,
- Long enough to do the job safely,
- Have a handhold available to allow the worker to maintain 3 points of contact where possible,
- Used without overreaching,
- Inspected and checked regularly where necessary.

Duty holders should check that workers are fit to use the equipment that they are provided with. Employees or contractors should report any issues (including health issues) that may affect their safety or the safety of others. Some of the human factors that would prevent you from using a ladder are:

- Recurring dizziness
- Epilepsy
- Psychiatric conditions (Including fear of heights)
- Heart condition
- Severe lung conditions
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Significant impaired joint function
- Medication that recommends you do not operate machinery could also be a problem

**So regardless of what industry you are employed in, the risk of slips, trips or falls should be high on your list of risks to assess and prevent. Unlike the roofer in the first of this week's HSE cases!**

If you need further information please call us on [01458 253682](tel:01458253682) or send us an email at [info@wilkinssafety.co.uk](mailto:info@wilkinssafety.co.uk)

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## Now to the latest HSE cases:

### ***Wirral roofer fined for breaking safety rules***

**A Wirral builder was caught on camera risking the lives of his workers on a house roof, a court has heard.**

Ronald Steven King, known as Steve, and two other men were seen on the roof of a detached house in Kingsley, Cheshire, without any measures in place to prevent them being injured in a fall.

An inspector from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), who visited the site following a complaint by a member of the public, also found the workers had to jump over a one-metre gap from a scaffolding tower to reach the roof.



*Steve King and another worker on a house roof in Kingsley*

Mr King was prosecuted by HSE following the inspection of the work on the four-bedroomed house on Brookside on 29 April 2013.

Chester Magistrates' Court heard that the 61-year-old had been hired to re-roof the property, including replacing slates and fitting insulation, and had begun work on the project two weeks earlier.

A scaffolding tower had been erected in a neighbouring garden but there was a large gap from the scaffolding to the house roof. There were also no scaffolding boards or other protection around the edge of the roof to prevent workers falling up to four and a half metres.

Mr King, of Airlie Road in Hoylake, was fined £3,000 and ordered to pay £2,457 in prosecution costs on 25 September 2014 after pleading guilty to a breach of the Work at Height Regulations 2005 by failing to put measures in place to prevent falls.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector Kevin Jones said:

*“Mr King is an experienced roofer and had taken on a major project to re-roof a detached house but he failed to make sure basic safety measures were in place.*

*“He not only put his own life at risk but also the lives of two of the workers he employed by asking them to jump from the scaffolding to the roof, and by not providing protection around the edge of the roof.*

*“The risks from working at height are well known in the construction industry but Mr King ignored the dangers. If we hadn’t been alerted to the work by a member of the public, then I dread to think what might have happened.”*

Information on working safely at height is available at <http://www.wilkinssafety.co.uk/pdf/whss/roofwork.pdf>

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## ***Moray firm in court over worker’s fractured skull***

**An Aberlour-based haulage firm has been fined for safety failings after a worker was seriously injured when an unsecured barrel fell from a lorry onto his head.**

McPherson Limited employee William ‘Dougald’ Sim, then 60, from Aberlour, was unloading the vehicle at Speyside Cooperage when the incident happened on 14 January 2013.



Elgin Sheriff Court was told today (25 September) that Mr Sim had driven the three-level vehicle loaded with 210 empty bourbon casks from the company’s Fisherton Garage depot in Aberlour to Speyside Cooperage, where the casks were to be unloaded for repair.

He parked along the slope of the unloading bay with the cab facing the front of the Cooperage. A landing sponge was placed at the rear of the lorry to catch loads if they fell but no restraints were put in place to prevent the barrels falling from the third tier other than wooden chocks.

A Cooperage employee opened the right hand side door of the lorry and, walking backwards, pulled the door around and secured it to the side of the van. Mr Sim started to do the same with the left hand side door, but when it was open by about a foot, one of the bourbon casks, weighing more than 40kg, fell from the top level of the van and struck Mr Sim on the head, knocking him to the ground.

Mr Sim, who had worked for the company for 27 years, suffered fractures to his skull and right eye area as well as a vertebrae. He needed 14 stitches to his skull and to his lower left leg.

He was later transferred to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary for treatment and needed to wear a 'halo' frame neck brace for six months, to be replaced afterwards with a soft neck collar.

The neurologist treating Mr Sim told him he was lucky to be alive as the impact of the barrel broke the top vertebrae in his neck, which can affect the respiratory system.

He has since been advised that the bones in his skull and spine may never fully heal.

Mr Sim was unable to return to work until mid-October 2013 when he needed a phased return to work and was initially placed on light duties.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that McPherson Limited had failed to ensure a suitable system was in place to secure loads on all third tiers of vans.

Inspectors found the van was loaded with 210 empty bourbon casks, with 80 on the bottom deck, 80 on the second, and the remaining 50 loaded on top of the casks on the second deck. These 50 casks were 'secured' by wooden chocks placed at the front of the casks but with no safety bar or similar protective measure in place.

McPherson Limited, of Aberlour, Moray, was fined £8,000 after pleading guilty to breaching Regulation 10(1) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005.

Following the case, HSE Principal Inspector Niall Miller, said:

*"This was an entirely avoidable incident. Objects falling from height remain one of the most common reasons for injuries and even fatalities at work, and it is extremely fortunate that Mr Sim survived.*

*"McPherson Limited should have put systems in place to make sure cargo carried at high levels in its fleet of lorries is securely held, and during loading and unloading.*

*"Mr Sim still suffers a constant dull pain in his neck and head and gets dizzy if he moves too fast."*

**Unsafe loads on vehicles injure more than 1,200 people a year and cost UK businesses millions of pounds in damaged goods.**



If you have any queries on any health and safety matter, please contact Jon Wilkins on [01458 253682](tel:01458253682) or by email on [jon@wilkinssafety.co.uk](mailto:jon@wilkinssafety.co.uk)



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