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IWH Good Practice Note

Title	Best Practices for Ceiling Work
Purpose	Good Practice notes inform members and providers on how to embrace best practice and how to deal with issues that may arise. They are aligned with, but do not replace regulation as well as endorse industry standards
Addressees	Work at Height Chambers / Access Towers and Ladders Chamber
Motivator	Industry contractors querying the requirements for doing working at heights within ceilings

CONTEXT

Concern:

Accessing ceiling areas with ladders, where the installation of anchor points or the safe attachment of the ladder is not viable as well as the use of fall arrest equipment on the ladders which cannot be anchored. The other concern is for the worker performing the work within the ceiling, where it is a high risk for the worker working within the ceiling void, to fall through the ceiling.

Recommendation:

It is suggested that technicians use aluminium access towers to gain height access as ladders are just too unstable and technicians don't have anywhere to secure themselves. Access towers in itself provides a stable platform and can easily be erected whereby the technician is always within a safe zone within the guardrails. Even harnesses are not required at this stage. The towers are mobile and can also be moved around.

Should the technician be required to work within the ceiling space, there are obvious dangers involved as the ceiling itself and beams are not weight rated and, on many occasions, workers have fallen through ceilings and suffered severe injuries and or fatalities.

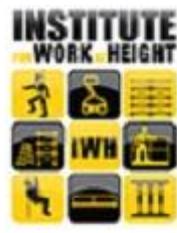
It is therefore suggested that a temporary horizontal lifeline be set up, that offers manoeuvrability to the technician and provided the necessary fall protection should he/she accidentally fall. Basic Fall Protection Gear to be donned whereby full body harness is a must. It is however suggested that the lanyard be shortened as to provide maximum fall factor restraint (0) and a suitable rescue plan to be implemented.

Important Notice:

The installation of a temporary lifeline requires planning and design work done by an engineer. This is not a "drop-of-the-hat" process. The contractor must be aware of the legal requirements for lifelines [SANS 50795:1996 class C] and need to present a risk assessment and a fall protection plan to the client for approval prior to implementation.

If the contractor is required to move around inside the void of the ceiling, the void needs to be inspected by a competent structural engineer, anchor points be identified by the engineer and the lifeline design be produced by the engineer for installation from mobile towers by competent persons, tested and handed over to the cable installation contractor.

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This could be a long lead time process thus the clients need to be informed of this legally required method and make allowance of the time and costs. Obviously if the anchor points are permanently fitted to the building structure inside the ceiling void then temporary lines can be removed, coiled up and stored on site out of harm's way for future use.

The contractor needs to convey this message to the potential client and make the client aware of the client's responsibility and legal liability if the process is not followed.

Legal References:

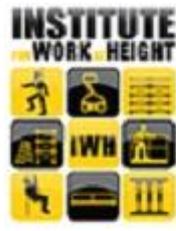
Occupational Health and Safety Act

Section 8. General duties of employers to their employees

1. Every employer shall provide and maintain, as far as is reasonably practicable, a working environment that is safe and without risk to the health and safety of his employees.
2. Without derogating from the generality of an employer's duties under sub-section (1), the matters to which those duties refer include in particular –
 - a) a provision and maintenance of systems of work, plant and machinery that, as far as is reasonably practicable, are safe and without risks to health,
 - b) taking such steps as may be reasonably practicable to eliminate or mitigate any hazard or potential hazard to the safety of employees, before resorting to personal protective equipment;
 - c) making arrangements for ensuring, as far as is reasonably practicable, the safety and absence of risks to health in connection with the production, processing, use, handling, storage or transport of articles or substances;
 - d) establishing, as far as is reasonably practicable, what hazards to the health and safety of persons are attached to any work which is performed, any article or substance which is produced, processed, used, handled, stored or transported and any plant or machinery which is used in his business, and he shall as far as is reasonably practicable, further establish what precautionary measures should be taken
 - e) with respect to such work, article, substance, plant and machinery in order to protect the health and safety of persons, and he shall provide the necessary means to apply such precautionary measures;
 - f) providing such information, instructions, training and supervision as may be necessary to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety at work of his employees;
 - g) as far as is reasonably practicable, not permitting any employee to do any work or to produce, process, use, handle, store or transport any article or substance or to operate any plant or machinery, unless the precautionary measures contemplated in paragraphs (b) and (d), or any other precautionary measures which may be prescribed, have been taken;
 - h) taking all necessary measures to ensure that the requirements of this Act are complied with by every person in his employment or on premises under his control where plant or machinery is used;
 - i) enforcing such measures as may be necessary in the interest of health and safety;
 - j) ensuring that work is performed, and that plant or machinery is used under the general supervision of a person trained to understand the hazards associated with it and who have the authority to ensure that precautionary measures taken by the employer are implemented; and
 - k) causing all employees to be informed regarding the scope of their authority as contemplated in section 37(1)(b).

Section 9. General duties of employers and self-employed persons other than their employees

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1. Every employer shall conduct his undertaking in such a manner as to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that persons other than those in his employment who may be directly affected by his activities are not thereby exposed to hazards to their health or safety.
2. Every self-employed person shall conduct his undertaking in such a manner as to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that he and other persons who may be directly affected by his activities are not thereby exposed to hazards to their health and safety.

Section 10. General duties of manufacturers and others regarding articles and substances for use at work

1. Any person who designs, manufacturers, imports, sells or supplies, any article for use at work shall ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that the article is safe and without risks to health when properly used and that it complies with all prescribed requirements.
2. Any person who erects or installs any article for use at work on or in any premises shall ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that nothing about the manner in which it is erected or installed makes it unsafe or creates a risk to health when properly used.
3. Any person who manufacturers, imports, sells or supplies any substance for use at work shall-
 - a) ensure as far as is reasonably practicable, that the substance is safe and without risk to health when properly used; and
 - b) take such steps as may be necessary to ensure that information is available with regard to the use of the substance at work, the risks to health and safety associated with such substance, the conditions necessary to ensure that the substance will be safe and without risks to health when properly used and the procedure to be followed in the case of an accident involving such substance.
4. Where a person designs, manufactures, imports, sells or supplies an article or substance for or to another person and that other person undertakes in writing to take specified steps sufficient to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that the article or substance will comply with all prescribed requirements and will be safe and without risks to health when properly used, the undertaking shall have the effect of relieving the first mentioned person from the duty imposed upon him by this section to such an extent as may be reasonable having regard to the terms of the undertaking.

The minimum training required:

Aluminium Tower User – erect tower and inspect
Fall Arrest Technician (Level2) to install temporary lifeline
Basic Fall Arrest Technicians
Fall Protection Plan Developer
Fall Arrest Rescue Technician / Supervisor

NOTE:

Conditions vary from site to site, and each has to be very carefully surveyed with a detailed risk assessment and method statement.

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