

Suspended Working Platforms

A 'suspended working platform' is a scaffold or a working platform suspended from a building or structure by means of lifting gear and capable of being raised or lowered by lifting appliances and includes all lifting appliances, lifting gear, counterweights, ballast, outriggers, other supports and the whole of the mechanical and electrical apparatus required in connection with the operation and safety of such a scaffold or working platform.

2. Suspended working platforms are widely used in the construction and maintenance of buildings. There have been serious and fatal accidents caused by failure of suspension ropes or improper maintenance of operating mechanisms.

3. To strengthen the control, the Labour Department has introduced the Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Suspended Working Platforms) Regulation. This Regulation applies to any industrial undertaking in which a suspended working platform for carrying persons is used. The Regulation, except section 17 which came into effect on 1 January 1996, came into operation on 1 July 1995.

4. This practice note provides general guidance on the essential safety precautions for the use of suspended working platforms. Reference should also be made to relevant safety legislation, Guidance Notes and Code of Practice of Labour Department regarding paragraph 13 below.

Construction and Maintenance

5. A suspended working platform should be of **sound construction, adequately supported and properly maintained**. Protection should be provided for all electrical parts, motors, cable against accidental or environmental damage.

6. A suspended working platform should be of sufficient length and at least 440 mm wide. To prevent fall or slip, its sides must be provided with suitable **guard-rails** to a height between 900 mm and 1150 mm and **toe boards** to a height of not less than 200 mm. The space between any toe board and the lowest guard-rail above it should not exceed 700mm. Sufficient safe means of access and egress should be provided to the suspended working platform.

/Installation

Installation

7. Only **wire ropes** should be used for the raising, lowering and suspension of a suspended working platform and the points of suspension should be at **adequate horizontal distance from the face of a building** or other structure so as to prevent the platform from coming into contact with such face. The **counterweights** on any of its outriggers should not be less than 3 times the weight necessary to balance the load on the projecting part of the outriggers when the platform is fully loaded. In addition to the two suspension ropes, a suspended working platform should be provided at each suspension point with a **safety rope** having an **automatic safety device** for supporting the platform in case of the failure of the suspension ropes or any mechanism for raising or lowering the platform.

8. The erection, dismantling and alteration of a suspended working platform should only be carried out under the supervision of a competent person.

Persons on Suspended Working Platforms

9. Workers on a suspended working platform should be **at least 18 years old** and **have obtained a certificate** after having undergone training which is either recognised by the Commissioner for Labour or provided by the manufacturer of the suspended working platform or its local agent. While being carried on a suspended working platform, every person should wear a **safety harness** with its lanyard securely attached to an independent lifeline or an anchorage with fittings.

Test and Examination

10. A suspended working platform should be **inspected** by a competent person before use. It should also be subject to a **load test and thorough examination** by a competent examiner before use or after substantial repair, re-erection, adjustment, failure, collapse, or exposure to weather conditions likely to have affected its stability.

11. Periodical tests and examinations thereafter are essential to ensure that it is in safe working order. A copy of the most recent certificate or report in respect of any inspection, examination or test and examination must be displayed prominently on the suspended working platform.

Safe Working Load

12. To prevent overloading, a suspended working platform should be marked with its **safe working load and the maximum number of persons** that may be carried at any one time. For easy identification, each suspended working platform should bear a marking to distinguish it from other similar platforms.

/Other

Other Observations

13. Further information may be obtained from the following documents, and the legal requirements, Code of Practice and Guidance Notes shall be duly observed :

- (a) Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance
 - definition of industrial undertaking in section 2 and general duties of employers and employees in sections 6A and 6B; and
- (b) Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Suspended Working Platforms) Regulation.
- (c) A Guide to the Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Suspended Working Platforms) Regulation.
- (d) Code of Practice for Safe Use and Operation of Suspended Working Platforms.
- (e) Guidance Notes on the Inspection, Thorough Examination and Testing of Suspended Working Platforms.
- (f) Safety Hints on Operation of Suspended Working Platforms.

Documents in (c) to (f) are available in the Labour Department's website www.labour.gov.hk/eng/public/content2_8.htm.

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