



Mast and Tower Safety Group

promoting safety and best practice

Guidance Note

GN-009

First Aid Guidance



MATS Group Guidance Note

First Aid Guidance

1 Introduction

This document is intended to provide guidance on First Aid at Height to companies who carry out work at height on roof tops or mast/tower structures.

The key elements of this document are:

- Legal requirement
- Training and Competence
- First Aid Requirements
- Procedures

2 Legal Requirement

The Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) makes provision, by means of the First Aid at Work Regulations, for first aid to be available to employees both within the main place of work and at other temporary locations. The legislation also extends to cover those who are not employees but may be at the main place of work or other temporary location and may need first aid.

In all circumstances it should be recognised that a rescue or provision of treatment to an injured person should only be attempted if it does not put the rescuer at risk.

Employers are required to carry out an assessment of the first-aid requirements which will include ensuring that there is sufficient training, first aiders and first aid equipment available in proportion to the number of persons and types of activities being carried out.

Due to the remote locations of most masts and towers, the potential difficulty of accessing a casualty and administering first aid, the traditionally accepted processes of providing treatment and ultimately transferring a casualty to hospital are unlikely to apply. Therefore certain suggested actions will not sit comfortably within traditional settings but are, nevertheless, appropriate in the circumstances.

3 Training and competence

It is recommended by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) that climbers or roof top access workers are trained in First aid at Work with additional training in First Aid at Heights to include suspension trauma and other first aid treatment that might be required whilst suspended in a harness or on a roof top.

Contractors

All contractors and sub-contractors will be required to have an in-date climbing certificate suitable for the structure or building being accessed. This will also include having the necessary First Aid at Height training. All contractors and sub-contractors will ensure they are familiar with the company/site emergency procedures before commencing work.

4 First Aid Kit

The provisions in a 'standard' first-aid kit as described in the First Aid at Work Regulations are likely to be ineffective in treating a casualty with a major injury incurred whilst working at height. A separate kit with major wound dressings is recommended, along with such items as sterile eye wash and emergency thermal blankets.

In extreme circumstances it may be necessary to use whatever provisions are to hand to augment first-aid kits. Such items may include: insulation tape, self-amalgamating tape, cable ties, bubble wrap, plastic bags – this list is not exhaustive!

The following guidance is based upon the casualty being at height and suspended in a harness either on a rope or attached to the structure. It is assumed that the rescuer has first aid knowledge, eg has attended an appointed persons course as a minimum, and that suitable dressings are available.

Some of the types of injuries which may occur when working at height are listed below and those involved in climbing and rescue need to be trained to deal with these. First aid should be applied by trained and certified personnel only.

- Suspension Intolerance or Syncope
- Hypothermia
- RF burns (exposure to high RF fields and contact burns)
- Unconsciousness
- Fractures (closed or open)
- Open Wounds & Serious Bleeding
- Amputation
- Impaling
- Electric shock

In the event of a death, CPR and first aid should be given pending the arrival of the emergency services, who will determine the action to be taken. The police and HSE will also need to be notified.

5 Emergency Procedures

Legislation requires all companies to identify, implement and maintain procedures to identify potential emergency situations and the method of response.

As part of this requirement, sites will have a plan to rescue and provide emergency first aid at height until the emergency services arrive. Workers and contractors should ensure they are familiar with these procedures prior to commencement of work.

Consideration will also be given to the safety of the emergency services whilst gaining access to the injured person.

Emergency procedures should include contact details with telephone numbers and the locations of nearest hospitals.

All accidents and incidents should be reported in accordance with company procedures.

6 Related documents and information sources

- 6.1 Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 - these set out the requirements for the provision of adequate and appropriate first-aid equipment, facilities and people so employees can be given immediate help if they are injured or taken ill at work.
- 6.2 Health and Safety Executive website - for example information on suspension trauma can be found on the 'Falls from Height' web pages at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/falls/index.htm> and the first aid pages at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid/index.htm>.
- 6.3 Related MATS Group documents, available at www.matsgroup.info/pages/publications.html, are:
 - Working at Height Training (GN-001)

- Guidance for Doctors in the Assessment and Acute Treatment of a Patient Suspected of Over-exposure to Radio Frequency Radiation (GN-004)
- Medical Requirements for Climbing Masts and Towers (GN-005)
- Mast and Tower Rescue - Guidance for Radio and Rigging Teams working on Radio Structures (GN-008)

The information in this document does not absolve contractors or suppliers from their responsibility to identify and comply with all relevant legislation, regulations and legal standards nor does it take precedence over laws regulations and external standards.