



**Mast and Tower Safety Group**

*promoting safety and best practice*

**Guidance Note**

**GN-010**

# Working at Height in Darkness



# MATS Group Guidance Note

## Working at Height in Darkness

### 1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide safety guidance to consider when accessing and working on steel structures in darkness.

### 2 Scope

The guidance given within the document is restricted to accessing and work on steel structures such as mast and towers. It excludes steel structures where you are required to install step pegs as you climb.

This guidance does not cover work away from a protected route or place of work, the repositioning of your point of attachment to enable access to a work area or traversing open steel work to get to a point of work. It is also restricted to light manual lifting of items, eg items that can be attached to your harness.

Working outside the scope of the activities covered within this guidance would require fuller consideration of the hazards and associated risks involved.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the site owners / operators rules.

Separate industry rules are in place for climbing wooden poles called WITHOD.

### 3 Definitions

Protected route – has a fixed ladder with a fixed fall arrest system in place.

Protected place of work – a platform with edge protection or a place of work on a protected route.

### 4 Training Requirements

There are no additional training requirements above those specified in MATS Guidance Note GN-001. It is recommended that prior to a climb taking place for actual work that a practice is undertaken for familiarisation purposes.

### 5 Hazards to Consider

A risk assessment should be carried out for the task. This should consider the normal hazards associated with work at height in daylight. Hazards that you may also want to consider due to the dark include:

- Lighting levels to enable safe access and egress onto site and work
- Security of the individuals undertaking the work
- Hazards which may not be seen, for example overhead power lines, unguarded excavations
- Inability to see hazard warning signs on site
- The fitness of the climber, eg if on-call factors such as fatigue, physical fitness on the day may affect the individual's capability. If the climber has had laser eye surgery a separate health risk assessment should be undertaken
- Ability to visually see incoming inclement weather.

### 6 Height of Climb and Numbers of Climbers

There is no restriction on the height of the climb and this should be determined by risk assessment. Factors that you should consider are:

- Communication
- Rescue and the length of rescue rope

- Task
- Battery life of lighting
- Inclement weather and temperature drop; it is recognised that temperature variation can be more dramatic during darkness.

Site owners may implement their own height restriction.

There should always be one person who remains at ground level. This is for security and rescue purposes.

## **7 Activities That Can Be Undertaken**

Access and egress should be on the structure ladder only. A fixed fall arrest system must be used. Climbing using a twin lanyard as a method of attachment should not be permitted.

Work should take place from a protected area, eg the ladder or a work platform with edge protection. Work activities should be restricted to fault finding and minor reactive work.

It is also recommended that structures near highways should not be accessed in darkness.

Any work above and beyond this scope should be subject to a full risk assessment and additional controls others than those stated in this guidance document.

Location of equipment should be considered at a design stage if it needs to be accessed during the hours of darkness to facilitate safe working arrangements.

## **8 Lighting**

It is recommended that portable lighting should be used at the base of the structure to light the ground to prevent slips and trips and also give a sense of perspective when at height on the structure. It is not recommended to light the structure due to the effect of shadows. HSG38 provides guidance on lighting levels in the workplace. It is recognised that there will be balance to strike between reaching minimum lighting level and minimising the effect of shadows. This should be a factor considered within your risk assessment for the work.

It is recommended that head torches are used by each individual climber and that a spare torch is carried.

It may be beneficial to take a portable light to illuminate the work area.

Wearing reflective clothing will assist in others locating individuals.

## **9 Reducing Impact On Neighbours**

The impact on neighbours should be considered particularly:

- Noise from vehicle movements and speaking
- Light pollution
- Back to back radios should be used to prevent shouting

## **10 Related MATS Documents**

- GN-001 – Work at Height Training

## **11 Legislation**

- The Work at Height Regulations 2005

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*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.*