



SPECIALIST ACCESS ENGINEERING  
AND MAINTENANCE ASSOCIATION

# Guidance on Using Temporary Suspended Access Equipment

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Temporary suspended access equipment is a cost effective and safe form of access utilised throughout the construction industry. The installation, modification, dismantling, and maintenance of a temporary suspended platform should be properly planned, appropriately supervised and carried out in a safe manner.

## 1. Responsibilities of the user appointed person

The user appointed person should act on behalf of the user organisation and have control of the management of the temporary suspended access equipment. They should be familiar with the safe systems of work and have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the method statements and have the responsibility for making sure that the safe systems of work are implemented

**1.1** It is the user appointed person who is legally responsible for ensuring that the TSP (Temporary Suspended Platform) is:

- Installed by trained and competent personnel.
- Safe and fit for the purpose for which it was designed
- Properly maintained and examined.
- Used by adequately competent and trained operatives.

**1.2.** User-appointed persons should note that they have legally required duties and responsibilities towards the suspended access equipment and all those that use it. Those duties and responsibilities include those identified in PUWER 98, LOLER 98 and in BS 5974. Ignoring these documents leaves the duty holder in peril of prosecution under health and safety legislation.

Note that the identity of the user-appointed person should be established before any work commences and is defined for the purpose of this document as a 'designated person with management responsibility for the safe use, maintenance and thorough examination of suspended access equipment.

## 2. Regulations and Standards

**2.1.** Other information relating to this document can be found in:

- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations – particularly regulation 3(1)
- Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER98)
- Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER 98)
- BS5974 – Code of practice for Temporarily Installed Suspended Scaffolds and Access Equipment
- HSG150: Health and Safety in Construction
- HSG33: Health & Safety in Roof Work
- The Work at Height Regulations 2005
- EN1808 – Safety requirements on suspended access equipment. Design calculations, Stability criteria, construction and testing.
- BS8454 – Code of practice for the delivery of training and education for work at height and rescue.

### **3. SAEMA POSITION**

- 3.1.** SAEMA recommends that BS5974 should be referred to for all activities concerning TSP equipment. This standard is considered to be a basis for best practice. Failure to comply with BS5974 may result in a successful prosecution in any legal action.

### **4. Purpose**

- 4.1.** The principal aim of this document is to provide guidance to operators of temporary suspended access equipment on how they can carry out their work in a safe, structured and orderly manner.
- 4.2.** It should also help user-appointed persons to understand better what is required of themselves and the users of the TSPs. Normally, users will be window cleaners, facade maintenance personnel or members of the company employed to install TSPs
- 4.3.** All SAEMA members are bound to comply with this document.

### **5. Health and Safety**

- 5.1.** User-appointed persons are legally responsible to ensure that a risk assessment for the use of suspended access equipment is carried out. This will include the access routes to it taking into account the surroundings and ensuring that all hazard control measures are implemented.
- 5.2.** Only adequately trained and competent persons shall use suspended access equipment.
- 5.3.** All operators of suspended access equipment shall wear and use the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- 5.4.** Although one person can operate some types of suspended access equipment, for safety reasons operators will frequently be in teams of a least two people. On all installations, the size of the team should be appropriate to the task and the risk to be undertaken.

### **6. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Operators whilst using a TSP must always, where there is a risk of falling, wear a full body harness and shock absorbing lanyard or an inertia reel system attached to a designated anchor position. Other appropriate PPE may include a safety helmet, gloves, boots, luminous jackets etc.

### **7. Reporting to Site – Operations**

- 7.1.** Upon reporting to site, ensure the relevant equipment and/or documents as required, in the risk assessment and method statement are in your possession. The following may also be required.
- Work permits
  - Access door keys or passes

- Equipment keys
- Anemometer
- Emergency procedures, etc
- Communication Devices
- A handing over certificate confirming that the TSP has been inspected in accordance with regulations and is fit for the purpose.

**7.2.** Obtain from the user-appointed person or a representative any further information that may affect the safe use of the equipment. This is especially the case if there has been any change to site specific hazards that have not been identified in the method statement or risk assessment.

## **8. Communications**

**8.1.** Communications can be either by voice, intercom, radio, hand signals or mobile phone. An assessment should be made at the time to decide which form of communication is the most suitable, taking various factors into consideration such as:

- Wind carries away the sound of voices
- Rain might damage sensitive equipment
- Bright sunlight impairing vision of intended observers of hand signals
- Hospitals do not allow the use of mobile phones on the premises
- Radio signals may be blocked due to intervening buildings
- The MOD do not allow unauthorised radio transmissions
- The MOD might not allow the use of mobile phones
- Airside restrictions at airports

The above list is not exhaustive.

**8.2.** General communication checks:

- Intercoms, where fitted – check that the sound is clear and audible
- Two – way radios - should be in good working order, set to the same frequency and the batteries charged
- Mobile phones – check that phones have a signal and are fully charged, and that everyone concerned has a list of all the relevant telephone numbers

## **9. Pre-Use Checks**

Immediately prior to commencing use of the suspended access equipment, review the risk assessment to ensure that no changes in hazards exist. Implement all the hazard control measures specified in the working risk assessment. Where it is not possible to implement the controls, consideration must be given to abandoning the use of the suspended access equipment until such time as the controls can be implemented. If additional hazards are noted these should be reported and no work should be undertaken until those hazards have been assessed.

**9.1.** The user-appointed person must ensure that the operators have been instructed in the safe use of the equipment and have in their possession any other relevant documents e.g. operating manuals and that these have been read and understood by all the TSP users. Especially important are the functional tests and equipment inspections which should be carried out every time a TSP is used. A handing over certificate should be produced by the installer confirming that the TSP has been installed in accordance with BS5974 and is fit for the purpose. The certificate should detail the type and location of the TSP and confirmation that it has been inspected by a competent person.

**9.2** The TSP, when rigged and ready for use, should also be clearly marked in easily -readable letters and/or pictograms that include the following:

- a) the Rated Load limit in kilograms (kg) for the specified task;
- b) the maximum number of persons (excluding materials) allowed to be on the platform or any given length or bay of it;
- c) safety harness anchor points when fitted;
- d) name of supplier and contact details

**9.3** Ensure that the TSP hoists and lifting gear have current LOLER reports as evidence of a thorough examination. If these are not available do not use the equipment.

**9.4** Ensure that the equipment to be used is not 'Out of Service'. Any equipment that is not in service should have an 'Out of Service' notice prominently displayed on it, e.g. a scaff-tag.

**9.5** Do not use the equipment during adverse weather conditions, particularly high winds or electrical storms – check the weather forecast beforehand.

Lightning storms are particularly dangerous when using radios or mobile phones and TSP should not be operated in these conditions

**9.6** Before commencing and during work, it is advisable to use an anemometer or other wind- indicating device to check the wind speed. The safe wind conditions should be in the suspended access equipment's operating manual, or manufacturer's instructions. However, if none of those documents specify a safe wind speed, SAEMA recommends not to use the platform if the constant wind speed exceeds:

### **11 metres per second (25mph)**

Even though this is a recommended MAXIMUM speed, it might be that even this speed is too high. Operators should take extra care of funnelling effects (for example, between two buildings or plant rooms) and be particularly careful near roof edges and building corners, etc. where wind speeds can easily double.

**9.7** Check the working areas below the platform are clear and free from obstructions, e.g. vehicles, people, open windows and other equipment.

**9.8** 'Men Working Overhead' signs and/or exclusion zones may need placing below the area of works. Do not forget access to the area from side doors, alleyways etc.

**9.9** Visually inspect and check all that the equipment is safe for use

Prior to use an inspection should be carried as per the daily checklist – This must include a function test of the safety features of the TSP

- Check that the TSP is complete and serviceable.
- Look for signs of corrosion, damage, distress, dislodged items and overstrain, etc.
- Suspension ropes should be in good condition with no obvious signs of wear or kinking.
- If the equipment is electrically powered, check that the RCD'S operate correctly.
- Any power cables and their connections etc. should have no obvious signs of defects.

## 10. Rigging the platforms

**10.1.** The installation of a TSP's is a hazardous operation and should only be carried out by competent and trained operatives. They should have the practical and theoretical knowledge and experience to install, adjust, maintain and dismantle the equipment. A TSP supplier will require a certificate of proof of competence from any user wishing to install, adjust or dismantle their equipment.

Hazards to consider during the installation of a TSP

- Hauling wire ropes up to or lowering them down from a suspension point
- Safe access to rigging points and hooks
- Operatives falling
- Operatives overreaching
- Dropping objects, e.g. hauling ropes or equipment (e.g. weights)
- Manual handling
- Weight of power cable and hauling rope
- Friction abrasion
- Cladding could cut rope (and cause damage to building)
- Swing hook adjacent to glass
- Incorrect fitting of safety hook to anchor point
- Crossing of the main and secondary suspension wire ropes

## 11. Safe Use of Suspended Access Equipment

- Operate the suspended access equipment as specified in the equipment operating instructions and as demonstrated by the installer.
- Always carry out a function test prior to the use of a TSP. Special attention should be paid to the safety features
- Ensure all users are competent in the safe use of the TSP equipment installed
- **Never overload a TSP. The Rated Load will be clearly marked and this should never be exceeded.**
- Always access or exit the platform from a safe and approved place.
- Attach the hook/karabiner on the safety-harness lanyard to a designated PPE attachment point (if provided) in the TSP

- Secure all loose items, perhaps by tethering them to the platform. Even the smallest of items dropped from a height can kill.
- The platform should remain on a safe surface until movement is required. Additional personnel may need to guide the platform's initial movements
- When operating the TSP, be constantly aware of obstructions and projections from the building façade – for example, flagpoles, CCTV cameras, soil pipes, external staircases etc. Platforms can be fended off the building or around obstructions by pushing with the hands where necessary. Be aware of the risks associated with passing microwave antennas. Ensure that the antenna is switched off.
- Always use any façade restraints if provided.
- Do not leave a platform unattended where it could be misused or cause damage. Always isolate the power supply, remove any keys and secure the equipment to prevent unauthorised use or movement by wind or weather conditions.
- Lifting apparatus shall not be used from any part of the suspended access equipment unless specifically designed for the purpose.
- Adequate ventilation should be available to minimise the inhalation of carbon monoxide and other noxious gases (e.g. from vehicle exhausts). Do not work below street level, in shafts or tunnels unless adequate ventilation is supplied and a rescue procedure in place.

## 12. Breakdowns/Malfunctions

- 12.1.** In common with all mechanical and electrical equipment, breakdowns occasionally happen. In this case the original installer must always be contacted and under no circumstances should any attempt be made to rectify or modify the equipment.
- 12.2.** The installer should as soon as possible after the incident record details of the breakdown/malfunction and ensure that both your employer and the duty holder receive a copy of a handing over certificate or engineers report sheet stating that the equipment has been thoroughly examined and is safe for use.
- 13.** As soon as possible after any reportable incident or accident, the following information under RID-DOR must be reported to the enforcing authority. It is the employees duty to inform his employer of any such event
- Date, time and method of reporting of the incident
  - Personal details of those involved
  - Weather conditions
  - Location
  - Equipment being used
  - A brief description of the events

## 14. Completion Of Work

- On completion of a given work period, the suspended access equipment should be made secure to prevent wind damage and left in such a position that unauthorised interference is prevented
- The power supply should be isolated
- Any damage or defect identified during the work period should be reported to the user-appointed's representative and original supplier. If necessary, the equipment should be placed out of service and fitted with an appropriate 'Out Of Service' sign.
- Remove tools, work equipment and rubbish from the suspended platform.
- Ensure that where possible roofs are locked to stop any unauthorised interference with the roof suspension system or electrical connections to the building.

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