

Toolbox Talk

Roof Voids



What?

- Many roofs are constructed in such a way that the space beneath the roof is enclosed to form a void so that various services can be installed without being visible to those within the building
- These 'services' often require to be installed, maintained, serviced and repaired and therefore means personnel must enter the void in order to do work
- Various materials are used in the construction these spaces and therefore it's important to find out the exact nature of the construction since the material may be fragile or harmful to health

Why?

- Entry into roof voids can present risks since they are not always specifically designed for safe access or to undertake work within the space and unless steps are taken to eliminate such risks this type of activity can result in serious injuries or conditions which can affect health
- Risks include, fragile/damaged floor or infill panels, restricted space, poor access, inadequate ventilation, combustible materials, obstructions, hazardous materials, inadequate lighting, trip hazards, falls from height, live services etc.

Do



- ✓ Assess the risks before starting work
- ✓ Check what material the void is made of
- ✓ Find out the load bearing capacity of the floor, infill panels or walls before gaining access
- ✓ Always assume the floor is fragile (will not support weight) unless proved otherwise
- ✓ Use suitable crawling boards where necessary
- ✓ Ensure access opening is large enough to safely allow the passage of personnel, plant or equipment
- ✓ Use suitable equipment to access the void
- ✓ Ensure lighting is adequate before entry
- ✓ Visually inspect the floor and check general conditions as you enter to verify the area is safe
- ✓ Wear suitable PPE (e.g. hardhat, gloves, eye and respiratory protection, safety footwear, overalls etc.)
- ✓ Watch out for trip and slip hazards
- ✓ Make sure any leading edges or openings are protected properly to prevent falls
- ✓ Ensure ventilation is adequate to provide sufficient fresh air and to control temperature within the space
- ✓ Take steps to use extraction equipment when undertaking work which gives off fume or vapour
- ✓ Ensure you can evacuate quickly in an emergency

Don't



- ✗ Work if the lighting is not adequate
- ✗ Assume the floor panels can support your weight and / or any plant or equipment
- ✗ Undertake high risk work including hot work without a properly completed permit
- ✗ Leave safe boarded area when the floor is fragile to avoid falling through the void
- ✗ Attempt to walk rafters when in the void
- ✗ Leave openings which you can accidentally step into when moving around the space
- ✗ Hold onto insecure services (e.g. pipes, cables, racks which can fracture / move)
- ✗ Disturb dust or other material while in the void since you may breathe them in
- ✗ Throw or drop material from the void
- ✗ Overload floor with materials / equipment
- ✗ Leave waste materials in the ceiling void

