

Toolbox Talk

Suspended Ceilings



What?

- Many suspended ceilings are designed to hang from an existing roof structure using a lightweight frame so that the space immediately under the roof is hidden to form an enclosure
- Various services are normally put above the ceiling so that they are hidden from those who use the building
- This provides a relatively inexpensive way to install services within a building and in some cases to conserve heat
- Lightweight tiles are normally placed onto the frame and can be lifted to gain access

Why?

- Entry into the space above a suspended ceiling can present risks since they are not specifically designed to take any loading and unless steps are taken to eliminate such risks this type of task can result in serious injuries
- Risks include inadequate lighting, non-load bearing frames and panels, restricted space, inadequate ventilation, dust including harmful dusts such as asbestos, falling materials, damaged services within the space including live cables and terminal boxes, overhead obstructions and sharp edges around the frame

Do



- ✓ Assess the risks before starting work
- ✓ Find out the construction of the void
- ✓ Always assume the ceiling is fragile (will not support weight) unless proved otherwise
- ✓ Select suitable "work at height" equipment
- ✓ Make sure equipment is sufficiently tall to provide a safe handhold when looking into the void
- ✓ Check the access equipment will remain stable
- ✓ Erect barriers/notices to keep personnel clear of the working area below
- ✓ Ensure trailing cables are clear of walkways
- ✓ Wear suitable PPE
- ✓ Take care when removing tiles since there maybe material or dust on top or they may slip and fall
- ✓ Stop if there`s dust in case it contains asbestos
- ✓ Enter the void slowly and use a torch or lamp to help you see properly as you look inside
- ✓ Take time to establish what`s in the void
- ✓ Watch out for sharp edges, nails, wire, exposed cables, overhead obstructions, hot pipes etc.

Don't



- ✗ Lean access equipment against the fragile framework of the suspended ceiling
- ✗ Hold onto the framework for support
- ✗ Attempt to reach too far or climb onto the ceiling unless it is suitable for entry
- ✗ "Feel around" for things above the ceiling
- ✗ Tug or pull cables or other services running above the ceiling in case you damage them
- ✗ Undertake hot work without formal approval
- ✗ Drop things from the ceiling onto the floor
- ✗ Remove PPE until you are clear of the risks
- ✗ Leave risks behind for others to find
- ✗ Allow trailing cables or hoses to impinge onto walkways or passageways below
- ✗ Leave behind loose or damage ceiling tiles
- ✗ Use desks or other inadequate access methods to open up and look into suspended ceilings (you must maintain a secure handhold at all times)