

With the integration of innovative and specialised machinery, several sites are now accessed by drilling machines that are either incorporated or mounted on low-ground pressure units or machines capable of accessing slopes. The use of such machines is becoming increasingly prevalent across the sector. However, these machines introduce an additional hazard to standard drilling circumstances, namely the risk of working at height.

To ensure the safe operation of these machines, compliance with the Working at Height (WAH) regulations is imperative. Schedule 1 & 2 of the WAH regulations provides specific requirements for what must be provided, and the BDA Health and Safety Committee has prepared the following simple guidance for drilling operations where working at height is identified as a risk.

The working platform must prevent the fall of any person or object from the workplace. This can be achieved with a guardrail, toe-board, barrier, or similar collective means of protection. The working platform should possess sufficient dimensions, strength, and rigidity to prevent falls from height.



Key specifications for the working platform include:

- The top guardrail should be at least 910mm above the working platform.
- A toe board should be fitted to prevent materials or equipment from falling.
- Intermediate guardrails should be in place to ensure that no gap exceeds 470mm.
- There should be no gaps from which a person, materials, or equipment could fall.
- Access and egress points, such as ladders or stairways, should have handrails fitted, and a simple gate should protect the opening.

No tooling or equipment should be placed or laid on any part of a walkway where personnel may have access, any tooling should be stored in custom racking. Adhering to these guidelines is essential to mitigating the risks associated with working at height during drilling operations. Your commitment to safety is paramount in ensuring a secure working environment for all personnel involved.

When using guard rails as the main safety measure, failure to adhere to these regulations during a BDA audit will result in immediate termination.

Other measures may be permissible, however they must be fully supported by specific safety documentation and included in the site RAMS.

Supplementary guidance on safe access and egress requirements can be found in BS EN ISO 14122: 2016: Parts 1-4: Safety of Machinery – Permanent means of access to machinery.