

■ Toolbox Talk: Working Near Water

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Purpose

To ensure the safety of operatives working near or over water by identifying risks and implementing effective control measures.

Legal Duty

Employers must comply with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and relevant HSE guidance to protect employees working near water.

Why This Matters

The risk of drowning or serious injury is real when working near open water, particularly due to:

- Sudden immersion in cold water
- Waterlogged clothing
- Impact injuries during falls
- Fatigue or hypothermia
- Contaminated water, rodents, or poor visibility

Control Provisions

Safe Systems of Work: Develop and follow a safe work procedure.

Barriers: Use guard rails, toe boards, or temporary fencing to prevent falls.

Life Jackets: Auto-inflating life jackets must be worn. Train operatives in proper use.

Buoyancy Aids: May assist conscious individuals but do not replace life jackets.

Rescue Equipment: Provide grab lines, throw ropes, or a rescue boat with trained operator if necessary.

Alarms and Lights: Equip operatives with whistles and lights to signal emergencies.

Safety Critical Information: Communicate risk assessments, emergency plans, and provide inductions.

Discussion Points

1. What risks are involved in working near water?
2. Should life jackets always be worn?
3. What safety information must be communicated?

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