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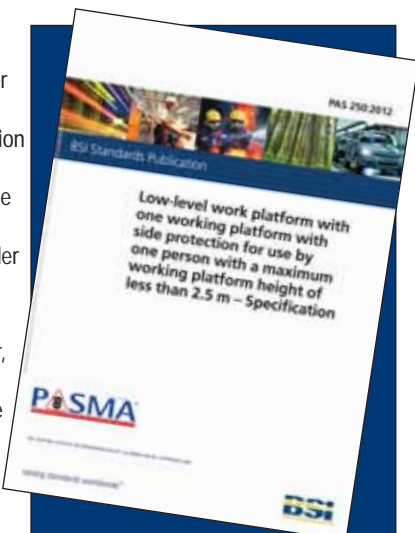


Low-level work platforms: PAS 250 set to raise standards

It is March and the official launch of PASMA's much-anticipated PAS 250, the Publicly Available Specification for low-level work platforms, commonly referred to as podiums or pulpits. Sponsored by PASMA, facilitated by BSI Standards and published under licence from the British Standards Institution (BSI), it sets out the minimum safety and performance requirements for these essential, everyday access products.

Championed by the PASMA technical committee, the other organisations involved in the development of the specification included the Association of British Certification Bodies, the Health and Safety Executive, Hire Association Europe, Ladder Association and the UK Contractors Group.

Joy Jones, principal inspector, HSE Construction National Safety Team, says: "We share PASMA's concern over this issue and welcome PASMA's initiative. Our inspectors have come across workers using products that do not meet minimum health and safety requirements. Falls from height are a major cause of death and injury within the construction industry and duty holders must ensure they are complying with the law and protecting themselves and their workers."



Intensive roll-out and launch campaign

The launch of the new specification is being supported by an extensive marketing campaign that will run until the end of May. It embraces press relations, website and social media activity, posters, fact sheets and seminars. PAS 250 will also feature on the association's stand at this year's Roofex, Safety and Health Expo and Vertikal Days events. The new PASMA app will also be used extensively to deliver the campaign's messages.

In addition to the introduction of PAS 250, another issue must also be addressed to influence the statistics for falls from height at low levels. The second is that everyone must accept that these products have their limitations and, like any other work at height equipment, employers have a statutory obligation to ensure that anyone who uses them is competent and aware of the factors that can influence their safe use. This can only be effectively achieved through training, which is why PASMA offers a half-day course dedicated exclusively to low level access. There is also a safety and best practice DVD. Accidents can and do happen even at low level.

PAS 250 and the low level access DVD can both be purchased from the PASMA website. Visit www.pasma.co.uk

Diary Dates

PASMA will be representing its members and the mobile tower industry at large at the following events in 2013.

Roofex: 1 - 2 May at the NEC, Birmingham.
www.ukroofingshow.co.uk

Safety & Health Expo: 14 - 16 May at the NEC, Birmingham
www.safety-health-expo.co.uk

Vertikal Days: 26 - 27 June at Haydock Park
www.vertikaldays.net



High sales but no standard

Podium type work platforms came into widespread usage following the introduction of the Work At Height Regulations in 2005, which led to a growing demand for low-level access products for use by a single person with side protection.

The designs that emerged were developed in the absence of any formal standard, and whilst many do provide a safe solution to low-level access, there are features on some of them that need to be improved by adherence to relevant and specific minimum design criteria.

PASMA's technical director, Don Aers, who has been directly involved in the development of the standard said: "Unfortunately, wherever there is high demand for a product, and no existing standard in place, there is always the risk that some designs may not meet even the most basic of safety criteria."

"In the absence of a minimum standard, these can be marketed and distributed freely, potentially exacerbating the already concerning accident statistics for low level work at height. PAS 250 addresses that issue and sets the standard for low-level access equipment. Now there is no excuse for using podiums that jeopardise safety and that can put users at risk."

What should you do?

In the first instance if you are either using podiums or stocking podium type equipment, contact your supplier or manufacturer and ask them to confirm that the equipment you have is PAS 250 compliant. If the equipment is not compliant it is advisable to consider arranging to have them replaced. All relevant PASMA manufacturing members now have solutions in place regarding compliant PAS 250 equipment.



As a PASMA member, if you have an interesting or unusual story to tell about towers and tower training, please send it to michael.fern@asma.co.uk