

Low-level access equipment (trestles, podiums and hop-ups)

Reason	Low-level access equipment is often misused, which can result in accidents. Being aware of the rules and following them can help to prevent a fall.
Outline	This talk covers some different types of low-level access equipment and how to use them safely.



Podium systems are safer options



Podium in use, correctly assembled and wheels locked



Hop-ups should be used with care



If you have to choose between a hop-up or podium steps, remember that a handrail will stop you stepping off the edge – podium steps are safer than hop-ups.

All work at height should be planned, organised and carried out by competent persons.

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Folding and adjustable trestles

1. If a risk assessment shows that they are suitable, they should only be used for light work and work of short duration.
2. Guard-rails cannot generally be fitted to folding and adjustable trestles and so these should be avoided, if possible. The risk assessment must detail why a trestle without guard-rails is being used for the activity.

Modern trestle systems

1. Modern trestle systems should be safe and stable in use, with safe ladder access, guard-rails and toe-boards fitted. Brick guards should be fitted where there is a risk of materials or tools falling and striking someone below. This is not the case for some older systems, which do not have many of the required safety features.
2. Trestle systems are similar in usage and appearance to a low-level scaffold platform.
3. A tied, secure ladder must be available for access to and from the trestle.
4. Be aware of any weight restrictions before loading the trestle with materials.
5. Ensure that boards are supported at the distances identified in the manufacturer's instructions or information manual.

Podium steps and hop-ups

1. Podium steps are commonly accepted as the replacement for stepladders; they provide a safe place to work and can be moved easily.
2. Training is important to understand their limitations, particularly about overreaching, surfing (pulling the mobile platforms along while standing on the platform), locking wheels and the use of stabilisers, if fitted.
3. Hop-ups are small, flat platforms that provide extra height (up to 600 mm).
4. If hop-ups are going to be used, a risk assessment will need to show that there is no other way to carry out the work safely.
5. Where hop-ups are used, great care must be taken to ensure that the ground surface is firm and stable and that a suitable and sufficient risk assessment is in place.



What is 'surfing' and why is it bad practice?

Why are many trestle systems unsafe to use?

What safety features should you be looking for before using a modern-type trestle system?

Why are podium steps only considered as a stepladder substitute?



Now inform your workers of the company policy on the use of trestles, podiums and hop-ups.