

Advisory

A service to A.G.Coombs Group clients

note

Safe Access for Building Services Maintenance

State and Territory laws require building owners and occupiers to provide a safe environment for all building occupants, whether they are employees, visitors or service providers attending the site to perform maintenance or other works.

Designers of buildings and building services also have a statutory responsibility to assure that facilities are designed to be safe for future owners, occupiers and service providers.

What constitutes a safe environment?

Guidelines for safe workplaces are set out in Codes of Practice and Guidance Notes available from the relevant State or Territory Work Health & Safety authorities. Contact details for these organisations can be found at Safe Work Australia: <http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au>.

Common safety considerations for service providers visiting buildings to carry out maintenance or other similar tasks include:

- Access to roof-mounted and suspended plant including safe hardstands, top alighting space and fixing points for temporary ladders; code compliant permanent ladders; safely trafficable roof surfaces; guard rails or fall arrest systems for work to be carried out near a building edge; skylights; and code compliant plant platforms.
- Provision of access hazard signage including non-trafficable roof areas, head height hazards, confined space and excessive noise.



- Installation of furniture/workstations or partitions below in-ceiling equipment where regular access is required.
- Luminaires located in difficult to access positions for re-lamping or replacement, e.g. not readily accessible from ground level, in stairwells, high foyers.
- Plant spaces used for other purposes, including storage of goods that preclude access or make access unsafe.
- Unsecured plant areas open to tampering.
- Protection of rotating plant such as vee-belt drives, shaft drives and exposed fans.

- Electrical isolation arrangements compliant with relevant regulations and appropriately labelled.
- Safe access for all electrical switchboards to allow safe movement and escape (at least 600mm clear in front of door opening). Switchboards located in high traffic areas.
- Handling and storage of hazardous and/or dangerous chemicals in plant spaces. Provision of safety information including material Safety Data Sheets and procedures in accordance to Safe Work Method Statements.
- Cooling towers and proximity of air discharge, adequate signage and provision of safe access to above-ground serviceable elements.
- Location and signage for mobile phone base station antennas and other high-powered radio frequency sources.
- Adequate lighting for access and maintenance tasks.
- Appropriate ventilation arrangements particularly in spaces that have refrigeration equipment such as chillers or gas fired equipment.
- Ergonomic considerations to minimise likelihood of injury whilst preparing for and carrying out maintenance tasks, i.e. physically difficult locations to access.

The increasing use of Building Information Modelling in design, construction and facilities management is providing an effective tool for the establishment, evaluation and ongoing management of these safety considerations throughout the building lifecycle.

Work Health & Safety Requirements

Maintenance provider organisations have a legal obligation to provide safe working conditions for their personnel. These organisations should have Workplace Health & Safety policies and procedures in place that require risk assessments to be completed prior to commencing work onsite and prohibit their personnel from going into environments deemed unsafe until appropriate measures are in place. This may preclude maintenance and other activities being carried out when required.

Service providers working in unsafe situations put building owners and occupiers at risk of prosecution and litigation in case of accident or injury.

For more information on providing safe access for building services maintenance, please contact:



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