

STATEMENT by the ABTT

Tallescopes®: The current position:

Discussions with the HSE in October 2010 gave greater insight as to their attitude to the ABTT/AAP Code of Practice in regard to moving an occupied Tallescope®. Whilst these instructions are more or less acceptable in themselves, they rely completely upon trained persons carrying out all of the instructions. By implication, if the complete instructions are not carried out, potentially dangerous situations arise. This is particularly true in regard to the use and correct fitting of the outriggers which prevent the Tallescope® toppling over should an imbalance occur while in use.

The HSE pointed out the matter of Human Factors, that is to say that many people, trained or otherwise, do not always carry out instructions to the letter and that these factors are the cause of many occasions of injury at work. The theatre industry will be required to implement systems of secondary means of restraint should a Tallescope® topple with someone in the basket. This additional means of preventing a fall from height is referred to as an engineering solution. Whilst HSE did not require or recommend any particular type of fall prevention/protection system, in the case of the Tallescope® this may be a wire rope fixed securely to the building or other suitably solid structure. The operative in the basket can then attach themselves to this by means of suitable PPE, so that in the event of the Tallescope toppling then the operative is prevented from falling a distance that may cause injury. Any such system should be thoroughly assessed and engineered to ensure that it does not create further risks (swing collisions/entanglement/electric shock etc). Given the recognised problems that can be caused by suspension trauma, a robust rescue system should be in place if such a system is to be used.

The HSE made it clear during the meeting that, because of the wide variety of different circumstances found in theatres, it does not and will not recommend a suitable universal system as such, but reminds employers and duty holders that they must be able to provide a suitable defence against a charge of failing to provide a suitable and sufficient means, so far as is reasonably practicable, of preventing a fall from height. Without such a secondary means of prevention, a defence against such a charge would be considerably weakened. Insofar as the matter of an established 40 year custom and practice of moving an occupied Tallescope® is concerned, the HSE reminded the gathering that employers and duty holders are required by legislation to regularly review their work practices in order that they can further reduce any risks in light of technical developments or known risks.

A working party to discuss the practical aspects of such engineering solutions comprising representatives from the HSE, SOLT, TMA, the ABTT and Aluminium Access Products is expected to convene early in 2011.



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