

This Technical Note considers the different forms of access for façade maintenance and repair, their integration with the façade design and the consequences of selecting particular means of access.

This Technical Note should be read in conjunction with:

TN 96 Assessing cradle and suspended access equipment loads

Introduction

Access equipment is necessary to facilitate safe maintenance and repair of facades and roofs. This should be considered from the early design stage of the façade.

BS8560 'Code of practice for the design of buildings incorporating safe work at height' is a good guide for the building designer.

The methods of access may be split into four categories:

- Ground based access
These include MEWPs (Mobile elevating work platforms), Access scaffolds and scaffold towers.
- Temporary suspended cradles
These are cradles suspended by cable from arms temporarily attached to the building.
- BMUs are generally cradles suspended by cables on an arm attached to a trolley running on tracks around the top of the façade. The arm may extend, luff or rotate.

Variations from the standard BMU include:

- Platforms connected directly to an hydraulic arm mounted on the building at a fixed point,

- Cradles suspended by cables from an arm mounted at a fixed point on the building,
- Roped access
This is predominantly abseiling although other equipment such as a bosun's chair may be used.

Basis for selection

The selection of a particular means of access will depend on:

- safety considerations
- building Geometry
- activities to be carried out
- risk of façade damage
- consequences of façade damage
- appearance
- cost

Safety considerations include risk of:

- operatives falling
- equipment and materials falling
- dislodgement of materials or components from the façade that might fall

Materials and equipment that fall from a tall building may travel considerable distances horizontally, particularly if they are sheet materials or they impact on the building as they fall.