

SAFETY ALERT

SERIOUS FALLS FROM HEIGHTS

Background

Recently we have seen a spike in the number of fall from heights injuries in South East Queensland.

In Queensland, each year there are about 1700 falls from height causing serious injury. The construction industry accounts for more than 20 percent of these injuries with around 400 per year.

Recommendations

Work Health and Safety Regulations s78-80 mandate that all falls from one level to another must be assessed.

- We would recommend ALL fall from heights be protected by passive fall protection i.e. hand rails.
- We DO NOT promote or recommend personal protection equipment i.e. harnesses for workers working at heights.
- An immediate inspection of the workplace to identify uncontrolled fall from heights including:
 - » Slope of work surfaces
 - » Strength and capability to support loads
 - » the safe movement of workers where surfaces change
 - » the stability of temporary or permanent structures
 - » ground stability for the safe support of scaffolding or a work platform
 - » entry and exits to the work areas
 - » edges such as;
 - Work platforms
 - Walkways
 - Walls or roofs
 - » Holes including;
 - uncovered penetrations
 - excavations (which will require guarding)
- Advice may be needed from technical specialist such as a structural engineer to check the stability of structures or load bearing capacity



Emergency procedures for falls

Whenever there are risks from working at height appropriate, emergency procedures and facilities including first aid must be established and provided.

Typical injuries from falls can include:

- unconsciousness
- impalement
- obstructed airway
- serious head or abdominal injuries
- fractures

WHS Reg80 a PCBU who implements a fall arrest system as a measure to control risks must establish emergency and rescue procedures. The procedure must be tested so that they are effective.

A worker must be provided with suitable adequate information, instruction and training in relation to the emergency procedures.

Further guidance on how to manage falls in the workplace can be found in the Managing the risk of falls at the workplaces COP 2011 and in the WHS regulations 2011.