

27/07/18

Serious Incident

- **Incident date:** 6/07/2018
- **Event:** Falling object from construction site
- **Location:** Princes Highway at Rockdale

Incident Overview

During the demolition of an existing commercial premises, parts of the front façade fell onto the pedestrian footpath, scattering debris onto the footpath and the Princes Highway. The incident occurred during strong winds. As a result, two northbound lanes of the highway were closed. There were no reported injuries.

SafeWork NSW, NSW Police, Fire and Rescue and Public Works Engineers responded to the incident.



Front and side view of the building façade with a view of the façade collapse onto the footpath.

The site

The site is located on Princes Highway at Rockdale. The site is currently undergoing demolition and is under the control of a principal contractor. A sub-contractor had also been engaged to carry out demolition works on the site. At the time of the incident, the front façade and partial return / buttress walls were the only building elements yet to be demolished. The front façade consisted of brickwork, and glass windows and doors.

The investigation

- SafeWork NSW Inspectors responded to the incident.
- SafeWork NSW has commenced an investigation to determine the cause and circumstances of the incident.

SafeWork NSW's *Prosecution Guidelines (January 2018)* outlines the Regulator's approach to prosecutions and SafeWork Australia's National Compliance and Enforcement Policy provides guidance on the Regulator's approach to compliance. These documents set out factors that will be considered in determining the investigative approach and appropriate outcome. The Guidelines are available on SafeWork NSW's website at www.safework.nsw.gov.au.

Safety Information

Businesses are reminded of their duty to identify hazards and manage risks to health and safety in accordance with the provisions of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017*.

Principal contractors and other businesses working in construction and/or demolition have additional and specific duties under the WHS legislation. Those duties extend to both workers and others – including members of the public, and require businesses to ensure the risks associated with unplanned structural collapse and/or falling debris are managed so far as is reasonably practicable in accordance with the legislation.

Businesses are required to implement reasonably practicable measures to eliminate or minimise the risks associated with unplanned structural collapse or falling debris by ensuring:

- the demolition method and sequencing is planned in consultation with the building/structure designers, or if it is not reasonably practicable to do so, in consultation with appropriately competent persons e.g. structural engineers.
- the building or structure to be demolished and all its components are maintained in a safe and structurally stable condition at all times until completion of the project. Temporary braces, propping, shoring or guys may need to be added to ensure that stability of the structure is maintained.
- external factors that may impact on the structural integrity of the building or structure are considered and the associated risks are managed e.g. vibrations from demolition activities, wind, water pooling or egress around footings or supports.
- adequate protection to members of the public are provided and maintained by installing, for example, hoarding, overhead protective structures, heavy duty scaffolding and/or or containment screening; or by implementing road closures and/or specified exclusion zones.
- measures installed to provide public protection are designed and constructed to withstand the applicable loads (consultation with an appropriately competent person may be required).
- measures installed to provide public protection are in place prior to commencing associated demolition works.
- all control measures are monitored by a competent person to assess the on-going suitability of the demolition method and sequencing and to identify signs of structural weakening e.g. movement or cracking.

Further information

Please refer to the following guidance materials:

- SafeWork NSW Code of Practice 'Demolition Work'
- Australian Standards 'AS 2601-2001 The demolition of structures'
- Safety Alert 'Dangers from masonry walls on construction or demolition sites – SafeWork NSW'

- SafeWork NSW Code of Practice 'Overhead protective structures'

About this information release

SafeWork NSW has issued this information to draw attention to the occurrence of a serious incident in the construction industry. Investigations are ongoing and further information may be published as it becomes available.

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing. Users are reminded of the need to ensure any information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate officer of SafeWork NSW or the user's independent adviser. No conclusions should be drawn from the information in this publication about the cause of the incident or the culpability of any party.

All photographs were taken by SafeWork NSW.

Go to: www.safework.nsw.gov.au

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