

8/09/2022

# Fall from scaffold

25 July 2022

A 26-year-old apprentice sustained serious injuries when he fell from incomplete scaffolding used to access the roof of a two-storey house under construction in Avalon Beach.



*The scaffolding at the incident site.*

## Safety information

Falls from heights are the major cause of death on NSW construction sites. Most serious and fatal fall incidents occur at a height of less than 4 metres.

Employers and PCBUs must ensure the safety of workers moving from one level to another, no matter the height. Workers are most at risk of falls from scaffolding when it is missing components, is misused, or has not been erected or altered by a competent person.

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The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing and the findings are not yet confirmed. SafeWork NSW has commenced an investigation in response to the incident to determine its cause and circumstances. No conclusions should be drawn from the information in this publication about the cause of the incident or the culpability of any party.

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When working with scaffolding, businesses must ensure:

- any erection, alteration or dismantling work on scaffolding with a risk of fall of greater than 4 metres is performed by a person with the relevant [High Risk Work Licence \(HRWL\)](#)
- scaffolding is only constructed on solid foundations and is adequately tied to the supporting structure
- handrails, mid-rails, and planks are securely installed
- workers are provided with a safe way to access and exit the work area
- safe access and egress onto stairs and between deck levels
- workers do not climb on top of rails or on the outside of the structure
- workers, supplies and equipment to be used on the scaffolding are under the duty rating (weight limit)
- voids and penetrations are covered and appropriately marked
- mesh and kickboards are installed to scaffolding to prevent debris falling onto neighbouring properties or workers below the work area
- scaffolding is inspected by a qualified person at least every 30 days and tagged with the inspection date
- workers complete a visual check of the scaffold daily before use and report any defects or issues for rectification
- a [Safe Work Method Statement \(SWMS\)](#) for working at heights is prepared for any height with a risk of a fall of over 2 metres
- all workers complete a site-specific induction and are trained in the appropriate SWMS for working at heights including working on scaffold.

On-the-spot fines of up to \$3,600 apply for altering a scaffold without a licence or failing to protect workers from the risk of falls from heights.

### Incident related guidance material

- [Managing the risk of falls at workplaces – Code of Practice](#)
- [Managing the risk of falls in housing construction – Code of Practice](#)
- [Scaffolding Industry Safety Standard](#)
- [AS 4576:2020 Guidelines for scaffolding](#)
- [Work safely at heights in construction](#)
- [Construction falls from heights blitz checklist](#)

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- [The pocket guide to construction safety](#)
- [Dogging, rigging and scaffolding licences](#)
- [Erecting, altering and dismantling scaffolding - Part 1: Prefabricated steel modular scaffolding](#)

### Further information

- [Traumatic event management plan](#)
- [Mental health at work – NSW Government](#)
- [Speak Up Save Lives App](#)
- [subscribe to SafeWork NSW newsletters](#)

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