

Fact Sheet

Falling objects



This fact sheet provides general guidance for persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs) and workers on managing risks to health and safety posed by falling objects.

Background

Falling objects can present a significant risk and cause serious injury or fatality to workers or members of the public.

It is essential to ensure objects do not fall onto workers or other persons who may be under or adjacent to the area and that control measures are implemented to eliminate or minimise the associated risks.

PCBU must do's

A PCBU must manage the risks associated with an object falling on a person if it is reasonably likely there is a risk of injury.

1. Eliminate the risk so far as is reasonably practicable by designing it out of the construction process.
2. If elimination is not reasonably practicable, you need to minimise the risk.
3. If you cannot prevent an object from falling, you must develop a safe system of raising and lowering the object to stop it free-falling.
4. Where you can't prevent from falling, make sure the hazard is removed or controlled to prevent injury by providing overhead protection on mobile plant and installing a secure barrier.

Administrative controls such as [Safe work method statements \(SWMS\)](#), training as well as [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#) are the last control option in the Hierarchy of Control.

[Regulation clause 54](#)

Management of risk of falling objects

[Regulation clause 55](#)

Minimising risk associated with falling objects

What are examples of falling objects?

The most common items observed include:

- parts of a structure being built or dismantled
- walls being demolished
- materials stored or stacked at the workplace
- construction or waste material
- debris
- plant
- tools
- scaffolding components including building materials falling from the scaffold
- pre-cast concrete panels
- stacked tiles from roofs.

What measures can PCBU's apply?

The same considerations to a person falling from heights should be applied to falling objects.

Working at heights or around open excavations presents a risk of people or objects that can fall, topple over or roll over.

If you cannot perform the work safely from the ground or from a solid construction, fall prevention should be provided.



Fall prevention must be considered and implemented first before considering options for arresting the fall of objects.

Fall prevention control measures may include:

- using the appropriate equipment to raise and lower objects including ensuring working load limits are not exceeded
- providing a secure physical barrier at the edge of the elevated area, such as toe boards or infill panels that form part of a guardrail system
- erecting perimeter containment screening made of mesh, timber, plywood or metal sheeting. The framework supporting the screen should be able to bear the load of the screen
- inspecting pallets each time before use to make sure they are in a safe condition
- loading pallets correctly to ensure load stability. Banding, shrink or stretch wrap can help with this.

Falling objects control measures may include:

- securing and properly bracing structures
- securing loose material such as plywood, iron sheets and off-cuts against the wind
- using chutes when placing debris into a skip below the work area
- erecting perimeter containment screens
- not stacking materials close to un-meshed guardrails and perimeter edges
- enclosing areas over which loads are being lifted
- using appropriate edge protection
- erecting catch platforms and/or nets
- using a gantry where work involving multiple levels is being performed beside a footpath
- closing the adjoining area to form an exclusion zone
- establishing traffic management devices including road diversions or traffic detours

- using a spotter on the ground level when loads are being lifted to higher levels
- using traffic controllers to direct pedestrians or other traffic
- using PPE such as hard hats and tool lanyards.

Fall arrest control measures may include:

- identifying the types of objects, the fall gradient and distance to ensure protective equipment or structures are strong enough to withstand the impact forces of the falling object
- erecting a covered pedestrian walkway
- erecting a catch platform with vertical sheeting or perimeter screening
- providing overhead protective structures on mobile plant.

Falling objects: Incidents and learnings

- [Construction garbage chute collapse - February 2021](#)
- [Falling object from Construction Site - October 2018](#)

Further information

- [Code of practice for managing the risk of falls at workplaces](#)
- [Code of practice construction work](#)
- [Code of practice for managing the risk of falls in housing construction](#)
- [Code of practice on how to manage work health and safety risks](#)
- [Code of practice on Demolition work](#)
- [SafeWork Australia 'Falling Objects Fact Sheet'](#)

For further information about how to prevent falling objects, see www.safework.nsw.gov.au or call 13 10 50.

SafeWork NSW “[Speak Up Save Lives](#)” app – to report unsafe work.

[Small Business Rebate](#), get up to \$1,000 towards the cost of workplace health and safety items.

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This publication may contain information about the regulation and enforcement of work health and safety in NSW. It may include some of your obligations under some of the legislation that SafeWork NSW administers. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation.

Information on the latest laws can be checked by visiting the NSW legislation website.

www.safework.nsw.gov.au

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