Editorial

WorkSafe Construction Practices Unit Program Officer, Steve Darnley devotes this week’s editorial to a recent Safety Alert.

Falling down stair voids has traditionally been one of the biggest killers of workers on housing construction sites. To protect workers from this risk, the builder will frequently engage a hire company to install a stair void protection system.

Recently, WorkSafe published a new Safety Alert titled Tampering with stair void protection. The issuing of this Safety Alert followed a number of incidents late last year, where workers were seriously injured when the stair void protection they were standing on collapsed.

The list of reported incidents in this this edition of Safety Soapbox, records another reported stair void protection collapse, resulting in another worker being injured.

These incidents do not just put workers at risk from the fall onto the floor below - but also at risk of landing on the debris of the collapsed void protection or being struck by the debris once they have landed.

Stair void protection systems have been a great safety innovation for the housing industry, but like most safety controls used in construction they need to be suitable for the works that are undertaken onsite. A void protection that does not allow materials to be safely passed up is at risk of being tampered with, unless there is a safe alternative method for contractors to get their materials and tools upstairs.

If you hire stair void protection, you should read the WorkSafe Safety Alert and check if you are doing all that is reasonably practicable to prevent stair void collapses on your sites.

Read more
Survey winner - $200 voucher!
There are a few hours to go before our Safety Soapbox survey closes. Get in now to have your say! We have received excellent feedback from more than 335 Soapbox readers, regarding our proposed refresh to Safety Soapbox. Thank you!

The winner of the $200 voucher will be drawn today at 5pm and the winner notified the following day.

Based on all your feedback, we will begin to consider how we can improve Safety Soapbox. Many thanks for your input into our survey. We greatly appreciate the insights. Stay tuned!

Worker killed in trench collapse
A 19 year old worker has died, when a trench collapsed onto him, while he was laying sewage pipes at the site of a new housing estate at Cranbourne East south-east of Melbourne. WorkSafe is investigating.

Read more
For more information on working safely in trenches see WorkSafe 2011 Safety Alert.

Serious leg injuries
The operator of a skid steer loader has suffered serious leg injuries after his leg got trapped by the loader mechanism at a Prahran construction site in Melbourne's inner south-east. WorkSafe is investigating.

Read more

More information on electrical installations
WorkSafe has published an information sheet regarding electrical installations on construction sites and the associated Industry Standard. This information sheet is an updated version of the FAQs about the 2002 Industry Standard for electrical installations on construction sites.

Read more

Prosecution update
Since the last edition, no construction related prosecutions have been finalised. However, the WorkSafe prosecution webpage has two new updates:

- a prosecution in relation to a worker being burned while cutting a 44 gallon drum
- an enforceable undertaking after an incident, where a worker was injured by a stump grinder.

View the Prosecution update

Update on AS/NZS 1576.3 - scaffolding

Western Australia

Proposal to ban live electrical work
Western Australia’s EnergySafety has issued a discussion paper to industry to ban live electrical work. The discussion paper follows and incident where two men were killed and another two were severely injured in an explosion while doing electrical work in February.

View or download the discussion paper
View media report

New South Wales

Safety Alert - stored energy in u-shaped cable bolt packaging
The NSW Department of Resources and Energy has issued a new Safety Alert about the dangers of stored energy in the stackable steel framed packaging of u-shaped cable bolts. The stored energy can cause the cable bolts to spring open when the packaging is undone, which can result in injuries, particularly to the hands.

Read more

South Australia

Media release – heavy trailer couplings
SafeWork SA is urging the operators of heavy vehicles to regularly inspect the integrity of all heavy vehicle trailer couplings and to look for loose components and damage such as cracks or dents, further to the manufacturer’s guidelines.

Read more

Queensland

Worker dies in scaffold fall
A 44 year old worker died after falling from scaffold at a Gold Coast construction site. Workplace Health and Safety officials are investigating.
Safety Alert - multi-cutters and other discs on power and air tools
Workplace Health and Safety Queensland has revised and reissued its Safety Alert that highlights the hazards associated with the use of multi-cutters and grinding or cutting discs fitted on power tools and air tools.

Safety Alert - mine
The Queensland Mine Inspectorate has issued a Safety Alert following the death of a mine worker who was struck by a large piece of rib material at an underground coal mine.

Safety Bulletin - mine
The Queensland Mine Inspectorate has issued a Safety Bulletin after a recent fall at a Bowen Basin underground coal mine.

NZ

Precast concrete panels collapse
A worker has been taken to Auckland City Hospital with a broken leg and internal injuries after precast concrete slabs collapsed on a Silverdale construction site, while a panel was being lowered by a crane. WorkSafe NZ is investigating.

Motorcyclist killed at road works
A motorcyclist has died after colliding with a reversing road works vehicle at Meremere. An investigation is being undertaken by Waikato Serious Crash Unit, Commercial Vehicle Investigation Unit and WorkSafe NZ.
Important information:

1. WorkSafe Victoria collects personal information to enable us to perform our functions. For more information about the use, access and disclosure of this information, refer to our privacy policy at our website worksafe.vic.gov.au.
2. Safety Soapbox includes material from a variety of other sources.
3. Material from other organisations is provided in good faith as representing the views and policies of those organisations. It does not necessarily reflect the views or policy of WorkSafe Victoria.
4. Please consider the environment before printing.

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