



Mines Safety Significant Incident Report No. 171

Fatality after fall from cantilevered scaffold platform

Summary of incident

An employee was killed when the cantilevered scaffold platform he was dismantling collapsed into the water at a ship loading facility in the Pilbara region of Western Australia.

The preliminary investigation indicates the cantilevered platform and associated “drop” scaffold was constructed using a modular prefabricated scaffold system and was installed under the wharf immediately above the sea.

Probable causes

The investigation is at an early stage and probable causes are yet to be confirmed.

Action required

Although the investigation is at an early stage, the incident should send a warning to all persons who use or manage scaffold activities on site to follow well established safety rules.

Resources Safety expects that the following safety precautions are adopted as a minimum when erecting, altering or dismantling scaffold over water:

- Develop a documented risk assessment signed by a competent person describing the safety precautions to be adopted before erecting, altering and dismantling scaffold. Applicable Australian Standards and manufacturer’s specifications must be reviewed and relevant information included in the document.
- Ensure that people working over or adjacent to water or any other liquid wear an approved personal flotation devices at all times where there is the potential to fall into the water or liquid.
- Install a suitable fall injury prevention system and provide adequate training and supervision to ensure that the fall prevention systems are suitable and used correctly.

Further information

Australian Standards AS/NZS 1576 series *Scaffolding* and AS/NZS 4576:1995 *Guidelines for scaffolding*.

Commission for Occupational Safety and Health, 2008, *Fall prevention for scaffolders – guidance note*.

Commission for Occupational Safety and Health, 2004, *Prevention of falls at workplaces – code of practice*.

Simon Ridge

STATE MINING ENGINEER

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