

Fall through ventilation shaft

21 August 2019

Incident overview

A 38-year-old man sustained fatal injuries when he fell through a construction site ventilation shaft in Jordan Springs, in western Sydney. The worker was clearing building material from the roof, when he fell down the shaft.



Image of the construction site after the incident took place

The investigation

- SafeWork NSW Construction and Investigation and Emergency Response inspectors responded to the incident.
- SafeWork NSW has commenced an investigation to determine the cause and circumstances of the incident.

17/09/2019

Safety information

This safety alert reminds you of your 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](#).

Falls from heights are a major cause of fatalities and serious injuries in NSW workplaces. You must consider 'reasonably practicable' control measures to manage the risk of falls from heights.

Businesses should:

- Give your workers a safe means of access and egress to work areas.
- Identify penetrations and install covers or guardrails
 - Use covers that are strong enough to withstand the expected load of workers and materials; fix them in place to prevent accidental removal; and mark them so they're not mistaken for construction material.
 - Guardrails should comply with the AS/NZS 4994 series or AS 1657.
- Identify where penetrations may open once formwork is removed and install covers or guardrails before stripping.
- Put mesh into concrete slabs, as a backup to covers or guardrails.

Further information

- [Managing the risk of falls at workplaces - COP](#)
- [Construction work - COP](#)
- [Formwork COP \(NSW\)](#)
- [Safe Work Australia – Formwork Guidance Material](#)
- [SafeWork pocket guide to construction safety](#)
- [Erecting and dismantling formwork - safety videos](#)
- [Falls through voids - safety video](#)
- [Specific laws about working safely at heights - WHS Regulation 2017 Part 4.4 Falls](#)