

06/05/2022

Five metre fall through window

6 May 2022

A 39-year-old plasterer was seriously injured while carrying out renovation work in a school library at Wahroonga. The worker was working on the inside of an unprotected window when he fell approximately five metres through the window to the ground below sustaining serious head and spinal injuries.



The worker fell through the first story window

Safety information

Employers must protect workers from the risk of falling from one level to another – no matter the height. Some workers may require additional supervision or information to work safely.

Consider 'reasonably practicable' control measures to manage the risks associated with working at heights.

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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Businesses should:

- inspect the site prior to commencing any work at heights in order to assess and plan for suitable safety controls to prevent risk of falls
- develop a site-specific Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) for any high-risk construction work with a risk of falls over two metres. Ensure the SWMS is understood by all persons using the document, including translating SWMS for workers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- conduct work on the ground or on a solid construction. If you don't have to work at heights, don't. Working from the ground is always the safest option
- use a fall-prevention device. If you have to work from a height, you need to manage the risk of a fall. A fall-prevention device is best because it will prevent your workers from falling. Examples include temporary work platforms, guardrails and scaffolding
- use a work-positioning system. When it is not possible to use a fall-prevention device, a work-positioning system is your next best option. This system either prevents a fall hazard being reached or enables a person to work supported in tension in a way that prevents the person from falling. Examples of this include elevating work platforms such as scissor lifts
- use physical barriers such as temporary edge protection or covers in unprotected areas where there is a risk to workers
- provide information, training and instruction to workers. This should be provided in a way that is readily understandable to all workers
- provide adequate supervision by a competent person, especially if workers are undergoing training or are unfamiliar with the working environment.

The [Working safely at heights in construction campaign](#) (launched by SafeWork NSW in June 2021) aims to provide resources especially aimed at young workers and workers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in particular.

Related information

- [Managing the risk of falls at workplaces - Code of Practice](#)
- [Construction Work - Code of Practice](#)
- [The pocket guide to construction safety - SafeWork NSW](#)
- [Prepare a safe work method statement - Safework NSW](#)
- [Traumatic event management plan - SafeWork NSW](#)
- [Mental health at work - NSW Government](#)

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