This safety alert is published as a result of recent scaffolding collapses in the NSW and Victorian construction industry. It alerts people to the potential risks of scaffolding collapses and provides general guidance on prevention measures.

Scaffolding that is overloaded or inadequately tied to a building is vulnerable to collapse. It is important that principal contractors, scaffolding contractors and employers assess the risks and develop, implement and maintain appropriate risk control measures.

**OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS**

Clause 58 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001* requires that a scaffold and its supporting structure be inspected by a competent person if someone or something can fall more than four metres from the scaffold or structure. The inspection must take place:

- before the scaffold is used for the first time
- after an incident that might reasonably be expected to affect the stability or adequacy of the scaffold or its supporting structure – eg after a severe storm
- before the scaffold is used following repairs
- at intervals not exceeding 30 days.

If inspection of a scaffold or its supporting structure indicates safety flaws, appropriate repairs, alterations or additions must be carried out and the scaffold and its supporting structure re-inspected by a competent person before its further use.

If a scaffold is incomplete and left unattended, appropriate controls, including the use of danger tags or warning signs, must be used to prevent unauthorised access.

The erection and dismantling of scaffolding must be carried out in accordance with AS/NZS 1576.1:1995 *Scaffolding, Part 1 General requirements* and WorkCover’s industry safety standard *Erecting, altering and dismantling scaffolding, Part 1 - Prefabricated steel modular scaffolding.*
RISK CONTROLS

Use the following control measures to prevent the collapse of scaffolding:

- Select and install scaffolding that is suitable for the tasks and the sequence of construction processes.
- Provide and maintain adequate means of tying the scaffolding to its supporting structure.
- Develop a system of work that allows construction activities – eg bricklaying, painting, rendering, façade installation, or window installation – to be completed without unplanned changes to, or removal of, scaffolding ties. For example, undertake these tasks by working down from the top of a building as the scaffolding is progressively dismantled, or provide alternative means of tying the scaffolding to its supporting structure that does not interfere with the work.
- Do not overload the scaffolding with excessive amounts of materials.
- Ensure that the scaffolding is able to withstand any anticipated loads or forces, such as strong winds.
- Assign an on-site scaffold coordinator to control the use of various scaffolding platforms and sections of platforms with the relevant subcontractors – see the industry safety standard.
- Engage a competent person to erect, alter and dismantle the scaffolding if someone or something can fall more than four metres from it – only those with the one of the following certificates of competency can undertake these activities:
  - SB = basic scaffolding
  - SI = intermediate scaffolding
  - SA = advanced scaffolding.
- Provide on-site workers and subcontractors adequate information, instruction, training and supervision regarding the control measures required to prevent the collapse of the scaffolding.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information regarding scaffolding can be found in the:

- Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001
- Erecting, altering and dismantling scaffolding, Part 1 Prefabricated steel modular scaffolding
- AS/NZS 1576 series
- AS/NZS 4576 Guidelines for scaffolding