

SAFETY ALERT!



Falling from height

The purpose of this safety alert is to alert employers and employees to the risk and consequences of working at heights.

Background

Slips, trips and falls are amongst the most common causes of injury in the workplace. MAKROSAFE clients reported **13** incidents in 2013 in which employees were injured after they fell from a height. Altogether the employers lost **161** days of productivity, which amounted to **R 63,112.00**.

One employee was busy cleaning a tanker when he slipped and fell. The employee fractured his ribs as well as the base of his skull and was off duty for **94** days. The total cost to the company was **R 36,848.00**.

Contributing factors

- The employee wasn't wearing a harness or any other device that could have prevented him from falling off the tanker.
- The tanker was parked on a concrete surface and wasn't moved to an area with a more forgiving surface.
- The top of the tanker wasn't hosed down and cleaned before the employee climbed on top.
- The employee wasn't wearing proper shoes that could have prevented him from slipping.
- The tanker was cleaned at night and the employee didn't see that the top was dirty.
- The employee had shifted his balance to lift some tools on top of the tanker.
- No precautions had been taken to reduce the impact of employees falling off the tanker.
- The area around the tanker hadn't been cleared resulting in the employee knocking his head against a boulder when he fell to the ground.

Action Required

- Ensure that the surface is dry and clean and that any residue or substance that can create a slippery surface is removed.
- Provide protective gear to all employees when they work at any height.
- Ensure that employees wear correct footwear before they access an area.
- Make sure that the immediate area is cleared of anything that could cause further harm.
- Make sure that employees always work in well-lit areas.
- Where possible, place soft materials in the area to reduce the impact if employees fall.
- Make sure that all items and tools are handled correctly and never expect the person working at a height to adopt an awkward position.

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