

MAKROSAFE Holdings (Pty) Ltd

SAFETY ALERT!

Edge Protection on stairwells, balconies and elevated walkways



The purpose of this safety alert is to highlight the dangers associated with unprotected heights and suggest possible control measures to assist industry to manage the risk.

Background

A worker received fatal injuries when he fell approximately 2.5 metres from an internal walkway to the concrete floor below. It is believed he had been cleaning the ceiling above the walkway and stairwell and inadvertently stepped off the walkway.

This incident highlights the potential for death and serious injury even when working at relatively low heights where edge protection is not provided.

Contributing factors

No risk assessment was conducted; therefore no control measures were identified to reduce the risk of falling from heights.

There was no edge protection, such as guard railing or vertical sheeting in place on the walkway to help prevent falls.

Action Required

Risk Assessment: A risk assessment process should be carried out to determine if edge protection, or covers over penetrations, is required at locations where a fall from height could take place. Factors such as the following should be considered:

- ✓ whether the area is an access area for workers and others
- ✓ the height of the area and possible consequences of a fall
- ✓ the work activities likely to take place at that area (i.e. will the worker be standing and focusing on a task where an unprotected edge is not in view?)
- ✓ the equipment to be used
- ✓ whether there are tripping or entanglement hazards (e.g. compressor and air lines)
- ✓ whether there are objects below that may cause more severe injuries (e.g. exposed starter bars).

Penetrations: If penetrations in floors are not provided with edge protection they should be covered with fall protection covers, secured in place, and of adequate strength for loadings that may be applied.