

# SAFETY ALERT

**DATE: September 2021**

## Proper design, construction, inspection and use of scaffolding

This safety alert provides safety advice for the NSW mining industry.

### Issue

A worker was climbing a scaffolding ladder in a coal handling preparation plant when they fell. The worker fell approximately four metres from a ladder and struck another person working on a lower platform.

### Circumstances

On 19 August 2021 workers were accessing the upper section of the building to conduct structural integrity work. One worker was ascending a scaffold access ladder between two elevated scaffold platforms, when he fell from the ladder to the scaffold platform below. A second worker, who was located on the lower platform, was struck by the falling worker, causing him to be knocked from his feet. The worker who fell from the ladder suffered a loss of consciousness and a laceration to the top of his head, which required stitches.

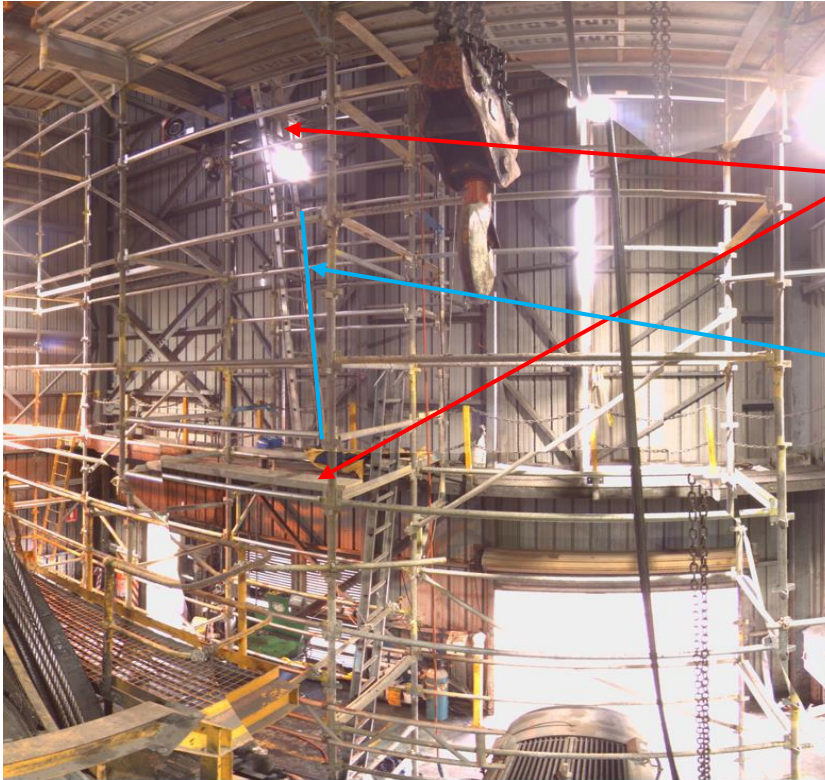
### Investigation

The interim investigation identified designing and construction non-compliance in relation to the relevant standards. The non-compliance involved:

- the distance between scaffolding platforms
- the height of access ladders
- the angle of the ladder.

It was also identified that workers involved in the task failed to apply the controls identified in the JHA for completing the task. Workers must maintain three points of contact when using ladders.

Figure 1: Scaffolding in place at a coal handling preparation plant.



The distance between landings exceeded standards limits.

Ladder angle was outside standards guidance

## Recommendations

Mine operators should review their systems of work relating to scaffold to include:

- requiring a plan for the design and construction of the scaffolding be developed prior to installation
- Scaffolding tasks should consider the following Australian Standards:
  - AS1576 series
  - AS4576:2020 Guidelines for Scaffolding
- that scaffolding is designed and constructed by a person who possesses the relevant high-risk work licence (coded SB, SI or SA). Operators are to verify that the licensed person is aware of, and understands the required standards that need to be followed
- review of scaffolding resources provided by [Safe Work Australia](#) and [SafeWork NSW](#)

- where ladders are used as part of scaffolding, they should be approved for use, fit-for-purpose, positioned at the correct angle and secured
- having a process in place to monitor quality and suitability of the scaffolding installation, as well as conduct inspections for compliance with the relevant standards
- certification to be completed and displayed as required
- a risk assessment or JHA is completed by workers prior to accessing scaffolding
- requiring workers using the scaffolding must check certification tags prior to use.

**NOTE:** Please ensure all relevant people in your organisation receive a copy of this safety alert and are informed of its content and recommendations. This safety alert should be processed in a systematic manner through the mine's information and communication process. It should also be placed on the mine's common area, such as your notice board where appropriate.

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## DOCUMENT CONTROL

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