

New Fall Prevention Regulations in Victoria

The Victorian OHS Prevention of Falls Regulations were proclaimed in October 2003.

Falls result in fatalities and injuries across a broad range of industries with injury claims costing approximately \$40 million each year in Victoria. Falls from height have been identified as a black spot in the construction industry and account for more than half of all fatal falls from height in Victoria.

A key objective of the new regulations is the prevention of incidents at workplaces involving falls of more than 2 metres and to prevent or reduce injury resulting from those falls.

Current OHS regulations partly address risks associated with falls of greater than 2 metres, such as the Code of Practice – Safe Work on Roofs and the OHS (Plant) Regulations.

Overview

The Regulations apply not only to work at heights but to other activities where there is a risk of falling greater than 2 metres.

Some activities (eg sporting activities, some emergency services employee activities) are exempt from the Regulations.

The Regulations contain a balance of performance based and prescriptive requirements. This mix can accommodate a wide range of workplace situations and technical innovations. Typical workplace tasks which require assessments to be conducted include the following:

- Inspection, repair and maintenance of roof/high level plant, vehicles & equipment.

- General access & maintenance of roof systems, high level fittings & service.
- Activities carried out at ground level where a person could fall 2 metres (eg into a hole)

The Regulations cover duties relating to:

- Undertaking a risk assessment.
- Requirement to provide information, instruction and training to employees.
- Increased consultation with employees and health & safety representatives.
- Requirements for safe use of ladders.

An employee who has been provided with information, instruction and training must carry out tasks and use risk control measures provided in accordance with that information, instruction and training.

Key Requirements

In order to comply with these Regulations, a systematic approach to risk management found in other contemporary OHS regulations must be adopted.

Employers will be required to:

1. Identify any risks which involve a fall hazard. (*A fall is defined as a person's involuntary fall of more than 2 metres.*)
2. Assess the risk of an injury occurring as a consequence of exposure to the fall hazards.
3. Eliminate the risk, or if this is not practicable, reduce the risk so far as is practicable.

The Regulations include a range of risk control measures. A hierarchy of control options is prescribed, with

measures designed to eliminate or reduce the risk of injury.

Control options specified in the Regulation include the following:

1. Can the work be conducted on the ground or on a solid construction?
2. Can a passive fall prevention device (eg scaffold, cherry picker, guard railing) be used?
3. Can a work positioning system (eg travel restraint system) be used?
4. Can a fall injury prevention device (eg safety harness, catch platform) be used?
5. Can the risk of a fall be controlled by ensuring that:
 - A fixed or portable ladder is used.
 - Documented administrative controls are implemented.
 - A combination of a ladder and administrative controls is used.

Any equipment and plant used as a control measure must be appropriate for the task and be maintained.

Emergency Procedures need to be developed to enable the rescue of a person that falls.

Target Dates

The regulations were proclaimed in October 2003 and all workplaces in Victoria must comply by 31st March 2004. Supporting codes of practice are expected to be available in the first half of 2004.

Noel Arnold & Associates provide a range of risk management services to assist compliance with these Regulations.

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