

ACCIDENT/INCIDENT ALERT

8 September 2004

Safe Access – Working at Height

Incident

A sawmill worker was fatally injured when he fell onto a concrete surface from a walkway at a height of 2.05 metres.

Circumstances

The worker was trying to dislodge a jammed log on a conveyor chain. He was using a cant hook while standing on the walkway. When the cant hook slipped, he fell backwards hitting the chain and falling through it onto the concrete floor below.

Investigation

The investigation revealed that posts and chains had been installed as a means of fall protection because it needed to be easily removed. This was

because oversized logs were frequently brought into the mill by a log loader and placed on the conveyor chain leading to the break down saws.

Recommendations

Industries that have walkways or service platforms should install solid handrails and midrails (including toe boards in some situations) along the edges (as per the *Guidelines for the Prevention of Falls*).

In situations where access is required for forklifts/loaders, best practice includes the use of:

- Hinged fences (these must open inwards); and
- Removable/sliding rails.

The post and chains method **is not** an acceptable means of fencing to prevent falls.



Post and chains – unacceptable



Removable/sliding or hinged fencing – acceptable