

Safety and health alert

13/99 Fall from ceiling joist

Incident

A 20-year-old roof carpenter working in Currambine was hospitalised during January when a ceiling joist he was standing on snapped. The worker was using a circular saw to cut a ridge beam. He had positioned himself with one foot on a ceiling joist and the other on a hanger. A workmate assisting him stood on the same ceiling joist resulting in the joist breaking where it had been notched to fit over the wall plate (refer to the photographs).

Both workers fell approximately 2.4 metres onto the concrete floor slab. The worker using the circular saw received serious lacerations to his left hand, fingers and forearm and required hospitalisation as a result of the injuries sustained.

Factors

Work procedures used by the roof carpentry team:

- two men standing on the same ceiling joist; and
- notching the end bearing section of the ceiling joist to fit over the wall plate as indicated in the photos contravenes the Building Code of Australia [clause 3.4.3.] and AS 1684 [1992] the National Timber Framing Code.

Both documents give maximum measurements for notching of load bearing members and state that the end bearing of joists shall be the full width of the wall plate.

Recommendations

1. Ceiling joists are not to be notched in excess of the maximum allowable tolerances outlined in the Building Code of Australia.
2. Carpenters must ensure that when installing a roof frame, the work is carried out in accordance with the National Timber Framing Code AS 1684- 1992.

Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site www.worksafe.wa.gov.au, or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: safety@docep.wa.gov.au.

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