

# Safety and health alert

## 17/99 Mobile scaffold collapse an injury

### Incident

A fourth year electrical apprentice suffered a broken right arm when an aluminium mobile scaffold on hire collapsed whilst he was working from it.

The collar locking device on the base frame was not properly engaged in the lower position to lock the threaded leg, this allowed the base frame to slip down the threaded leg causing an imbalance sufficient to topple the scaffold.

The collar locking mechanism can be a hazard if operators do not engage the lock correctly. They are progressively being phased out in favour of an adjustable leg that has a compression-locking device, which engages when a weight is applied to the assembled scaffold.

### Factors

1. Persons erecting the scaffold did not ensure the collar lock was engaged in the locked (lower) position of the base frame sleeve to the threaded leg of the castor assembly.
2. Persons erecting the scaffold were carrying out 'prescribed work' (erecting a scaffold from which a person or thing could fall more than 4 metres) and were not competent (certificated scaffolders) to perform that work.
3. Persons erecting the scaffold had no prior instruction or training in the erection of scaffolding.
4. Uncertificated persons carrying out this work must be directly supervised by a certificated scaffolder.
5. The scaffold was moved and then altered without the authority of the main contractor.

### Recommendations

1. Persons using mobile scaffold systems that have the collar-locking device are to ensure the collar lock is fully engaged.
2. Only certificated scaffolders are to erect scaffolding where a person or thing could fall more than 4 metres or persons erecting scaffolding shall be supervised by a certificated scaffolder.
3. Persons erecting scaffolding not exceeding 4 metres in height are to be properly instructed in safe erection and operation procedures.
4. Scaffolding on a construction site shall not be altered unless authorised by the main contractor.
5. Scaffolding suppliers and owners of this type of scaffolding should phase out the collar-locking device as soon as practicable in preference for the compression-locking device. Companies and employers must emphasise to hirers and users the hazard associated with the collar-locking device when it is not fully engaged.



## Further Information

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

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