

Safety and health alert

57/99 Falls from heights - boatbuilding

Incident

Employees in the boat building industry are exposed to the risk of falling from height, from unprotected edges that can be found during construction. Employees are also exposed, in some cases, to the risk of falling through unprotected hatch openings that can be found on the decks of boats under construction.

Factors

1. The lack of planning during the design and construction phase of boat building in regard to fall protection systems.
2. Lack of regular inspections being conducted on the upper levels of the boat during construction with regard to hazards and in particular persons falling from height.
3. Lack of guardrails around openings such as stair hatches.

Recommendations

1. Employers should, during the design and planning stages of boat building identify those areas where employees are likely to be exposed to the risk of falling from height during construction.
2. Employers should conduct regular inspections on all levels of the boat during construction to determine that employees are not exposed to the risk of falling from height. (*Refer Reg 3.49 Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996*)
3. Where persons are at risk of falling from height during construction of the boat, then employers must introduce control measures as defined in the Western Australian Code of Practice on the Prevention of Falls in the Workplace. (*Refer Reg 3.50 Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996.*)
4. Openings (such as those for hatches as shown above), that persons could otherwise fall through, must be provided with a cover strong enough to carry any foreseeable loads and fixed in position to prevent dislodgment, or guarded in accordance with Australian Standard AS1657-1992. (*Refer Reg 3.54 Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996.*)

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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