

Safety and health alert

13/06 Mobile scaffold failure

Incident

Two ceiling fixers sustained serious injuries when the mobile aluminium scaffold they were working from collapsed. The working platform of the scaffold was approximately 1.8m high, 3m long and 600mm wide. Persons using the scaffold had no prior instruction or training in the assembly and use of a mobile scaffold less than 4m in height. Both ceiling fixers inspected the mobile scaffold prior to use and noticed that the leg lock collars attached to the threaded stems of the castors showed signs of some physical damage and a build-up of dirt. The scaffold collapsed after one of the ceiling fixers made his way to one end of the working platform. The leg lock failed, which allowed the castor stem to retract into the vertical frame at one end of the scaffold.

Factors to consider

- Damage sustained to the mobile scaffold was not identified as a potential hazard.
- An accumulation of dirt was visible around the locking collar of the threaded leg, which may have prevented the collar from extending to the full height distance required to firmly secure the threaded leg.

Recommendations

1. Conduct a risk assessment prior to using a mobile scaffold.
2. Provide information, instruction, training and supervision to employees to enable them to perform their work in such a manner that they are not exposed to a hazard.
3. Ensure that all scaffolds are erected in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications.
4. Only competent persons should erect and dismantle scaffolding.
5. Persons using mobile scaffold systems that have the collar locking device are to ensure that the collar is in good working order and is fully engaged.
6. Mobile scaffold should only be used on a hard level surface.
7. Mobile scaffolds should be left with all wheels locked to prevent possible movement.

Further information

- Standards Australia – Australian/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 1576 Parts 1-6
- AS/NZS 4576:1995 – Guidelines for Scaffolding

Further information can be obtained from WorkSafe's internet site www.worksafe.wa.gov.au or by contacting customer services on 1300 307 877 or email safety@docep.wa.gov.au

