

New scaffold code will save lives: union



Unions and builders say the new rules will save lives. (ABC TV News - file image)

Unions and builders have applauded the Queensland Government's new code of practice for high-rise scaffolding after two workers died in a construction site fall on the Gold Coast last year.

The new code of practice worked out by the State Government, builders and unions will require engineers to oversee the installation of swing-stage scaffolding.

It also includes load testing, new design standards and mandatory training for installers and users of swing-stages.

Queensland Industrial Relations Minister Cameron Dick has thanked unions and builders for cooperating.

"There can be no cutting corners in difficult times," he said.

Michael Ravbar, from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), says the new rules will save lives.

"If they'd had the laws back before the tragic situation happened a year ago, probably would have prevented it without a doubt," he said.

"These are probably the strictest laws in respect to swinging stage or working at heights around Australia, so the Government has to be congratulated on that.

"Like anything, with more regulation - and stringent - there's going to be more cost, but at the end of the day you're preventing lives lost at work.

"It was good - the cooperation among the unions and the employers - to make sure these things are prevented again.

"It just shows that the parties can actually work together for the positive out of a tragic situation."

Master Builders Association spokesman John Crittall says the new code will add to the cost of high-rise projects but the extra cost will be relatively small.

"With the engineers involved, yes, there's a few hours of their time, there's additional design requirements, and there's the load testing requirements," he said.

"But in the scheme of a multi-million-dollar project that involves the use of a swinging stage, it's infinitesimal to the benefit."

Meanwhile, Queensland Cabinet will meet on the Gold Coast today.

Government Ministers attended a community forum yesterday and will meet at Southport later this morning.