

12/04/2021

## Height access worker fatality

**18 March 2021**

A 52-year-old worker has suffered fatal injuries after falling eight storeys at a Liverpool construction site. The worker was repairing flashing on the side of a building using an industrial rope access system at the time of the incident.



*Top of the building showing an anchor point.*

### **Safety information**

Work involving industrial rope access should only be undertaken when other means of accessing the work area are not reasonably practicable, such as scaffolding or an Elevated Work Platform.

When it is necessary to use an industrial rope access system you must implement 'reasonably practicable' control measures to manage the risks associated with working at heights.

Prior to connecting to an industrial rope access system ensure:

---

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing and the findings are not yet confirmed. SafeWork NSW has commenced an investigation in response to the incident to determine its cause and circumstances. No conclusions should be drawn from the information in this publication about the cause of the incident or the culpability of any party.

---

12/04/2021

- work has been planned, including hazard identification and risk assessment of rope access related tasks, and a suitable rope access system is designed
- anchor points have been inspected by a competent person and certified as safe to use, and information is available regarding their safe use, for example, load ratings
- the anchor points are marked with their load rating and the load correlates with the certification
- a visual inspection is conducted of the anchor points and site to ensure a safe access system can be implemented, and to determine what equipment will be needed to provide safe access to, and descent from, the work area
- consideration is given to how post-installation/certification modifications to the site may affect the useability of anchor points, for example, changes to the surface, or additional surfaces around anchor points
- the building façade is inspected for areas that may compromise the rope access equipment, and for materials that could be loosened and fall during the work
- all equipment to be used is inspected by a competent person and is safe to use
- a spotter is on site, has clear sight of the workers, communication means, and clear procedures are established
- emergency rescue procedures are established and clearly communicated to all workers
- all workers are competent in the technique, including emergency procedures, and have been trained in the correct operation of the particular equipment they are using
- exclusion zones are established and enforced that exclude and alert the public that industrial rope access systems are in use below the work area and near any anchorage locations
- the work is planned to account for the expected weather conditions

Industrial rope access systems should include:

- a main working rope and a back-up safety rope, each anchored independently to the other
- safe access to anchor points to set up the rope access system
- a full body or work positioning sit harness with shoulder straps
- descending/ascending devices and back up devices that are suitable for the type of work being undertaken, and appropriate for the size/type of rope and combined weight of the rope access technician and any equipment worn
- descenders that automatically stop the descent if the rope access technician loses control, i.e. lock automatically in the hands-free mode, and preferably should also fail to safe in all modes of operation, for example, stop the descent automatically when gripped too tightly in panic (panic locking)
- preferably, back up devices that require minimal manipulation by the rope access technician, and fail to safe in all modes of operation, for example, prevent or arrest a fall even when gripped in panic
- the correct personal protective equipment (PPE) for the tasks being undertaken, for example, helmets, gloves, hearing protection, goggles or masks

---

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing and the findings are not yet confirmed. SafeWork NSW has commenced an investigation in response to the incident to determine its cause and circumstances. No conclusions should be drawn from the information in this publication about the cause of the incident or the culpability of any party.

---



## Incident Information Release

SAFEWORK NSW

12/04/2021

The use of industrial rope access systems is considered high risk construction work if it involves construction work where there is a risk of a person falling more than 2 metres. The [Work Health & Safety Regulation 2017](#) requires that high risk construction work must not be carried out unless a safe work method statement (SWMS) is prepared for the work.

### More information

- [Managing the risk of falls at the workplace code of practice](#)
- [AS/NZS 4488.2 – Industrial rope access systems – Selection, use and maintenance](#)
- [IRATA International code of practice for industrial rope access](#)

View the latest incident information releases at [safework.nsw.gov.au](https://safework.nsw.gov.au)

---

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing and the findings are not yet confirmed. SafeWork NSW has commenced an investigation in response to the incident to determine its cause and circumstances. No conclusions should be drawn from the information in this publication about the cause of the incident or the culpability of any party.

---