



SAFETY ALERT

Worker falls through guardrail

INCIDENT

A mechanical tradesperson working alone in an underground metalliferous mine fell through the guardrail of an elevated platform while cleaning the mine water screening plant. The tradesperson fell about 2.5 metres to the concrete floor below, sustaining serious injuries including a fractured foot, broken femur, broken bone in one hand and a dislocated finger. The injured worker was not discovered by his workmates for approximately three hours after the fall.

CIRCUMSTANCES

The tradesperson was undertaking the daily cleaning of the screens of the mine's underground dewatering system. This involves using a water hose to remove sand and cement fill from the screens, as well as cleaning up the fixed plant area.

After cleaning around the floor level and waste trucks it appears the tradesperson took the hose up onto the platform above the floor level and began hosing the screens. During hosing the tradesperson either tripped or stumbled back onto the platform guardrails. The guardrail collapsed and broke, allowing the tradesperson to fall about 2.5 metres to the concrete floor below.



Photograph of fixed underground plant

INVESTIGATION

A preliminary investigation has established probable causes of the incident:

- Fixed guardrails corroded and in poor condition
- Inadequate inspection and testing of the structural condition of the fixed plant, in particular the fixed platform, guardrails and ladders
- Inadequate procedures for working alone.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mines should review their OHS management and maintenance systems to ensure that:

1. Testing is conducted regularly to determine the condition of guardrails and guardrail posts. Refer to Australian Standard AS 1657-1992 *Fixed platforms, walkways, stairways and ladders – Design, construction and installation*.
2. Preventative maintenance is conducted to ensure the effects of corrosion are minimised.
3. Appropriate procedures are developed and implemented for persons working alone. These procedures should include adequate communication and monitoring systems.

NOTE: Please ensure all relevant people in your organisation receive a copy of this Safety Alert, and are informed of its content and recommendations. This Safety Alert should be processed in a systematic manner through the mine's information and communication process. It should also be placed on the mine's notice board.

Signed



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