



Work Safety Alert Collapse of a Metal Scaffold

1. **Date of Accident :** June 2020
2. **Place of Accident :** At a chemical waste treatment plant
3. **Summary :**

While a gang of workers was working on a tubular scaffold for repair and maintenance of a chimney at a chemical waste treatment plant, part of the chimney wall at upper level suddenly collapsed and crushed the scaffold, causing injuries to ten of the workers.

4. **Work Safety Alert for Contractors/ Employers :**

To ensure the safety of workers/ employees engaged in repair and maintenance of chimneys or other similar structures with enclosed nature, the contractors/ employers should:

- appoint a competent person to conduct task-specific risk assessments to identify all potential hazards associated with the work, taking into account the nature of work, the work environment and the construction and structural condition of the chimney or structure under repair, particularly the hazards of falling materials and persons falling from height;
- formulate safe work methods and procedures for the work with due regard to the results of risk assessments, and follow the requirements of safety legislation, relevant codes of practice and safety guidelines to minimise the risks exposed to the workers/ employees;
- where there arises a reasonably specified risk and man-entry into the chimney or structure cannot be avoided, provide and maintain a safe system of work which should include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - implementing a “Permit-to-work” system to ensure all necessary



safety precautions are taken before certifying safe entry in writing, and clearly specifying a period during which workers may remain safely inside the chimney or structure;

- ensuring the records of all risk assessment reports and relevant certificates are properly kept and maintained;
- ensuring all safety measures recommended in the risk assessment report are in place before commencement of work;
- ensuring that only certified workers with suitable experience are allowed to enter the chimney or structure for work and providing them with adequate information and instruction;
- take effective steps to isolate the chimney or structure from all unnecessary sources of power, e.g. electrical, town gas, etc., by having them securely locked off, isolated and properly labelled as appropriate to avoid accidental switching of power back to the chimney;
- engage competent personnel to conduct a thorough assessment on the structural condition of the chimney or structure under repair;
- provide support to the walls of the chimney or structure as necessary to prevent any part of them from accidental detaching, collapsing or failure during the work;
- provide and ensure the use of suitably designed scaffolds for the work that are of sound material, good construction and adequate strength; free from patent defects and securely supported to prevent collapse or undue movement;
- ensure that every scaffold is inspected and certified safe by a competent person before first use and at regular intervals not exceeding 14 days;
- ensure that the work are carried out by workmen with adequate training and experience under the immediate supervision of a competent person who should have sufficient technical knowledge and management skills, and be able to read and understand the risk assessment report and method statement of the work;



- set up appropriate arrangements for rescue of workers working in a workplace with enclosed nature in case of an emergency;
- provide all workers/ employees concerned with the necessary safety information, instruction and training, and ensure that they are familiar with the safe work procedures and safety measures; and
- establish and implement an effective monitoring and control system to ensure all safety measures are strictly followed.

5. Reference :

- [Safe Systems of Work](#)¹
- [Five Steps to Risk Assessment](#)¹
- [Five Steps to Information, Instruction and Training](#)¹
- [A Guide to the Provisions for Safe Places of Work under Part VA of the Construction Sites \(Safety\) Regulations](#)¹
- [Code of Practice for Metal Scaffolding Safety](#)¹
- [Code of Practice for Safety and Health at Work in Confined Spaces](#)¹

DISCLAIMER

This Work Safety Alert (“the Alert”) is issued at the earliest possible opportunity after a serious accident with a view to drawing the attention of interested parties to the general safety precautionary measures necessary to protect people engaging in similar work activities. The material contained in the Alert constitutes general guidance only. It does not reduce, limit, or replace, any legal obligations upon any person to comply with any statutory duties under relevant legislation. Users such as Managers and Supervisors should make their own evaluation of the information contained in the Alert to determine if it can be applied to their own situations and practices. The Labour Department does NOT accept any responsibilities for any loss or damage resulting from the use of or failure to use of the information on the Alert.

Note: The material contained in the Alert is not exhaustive, and will be supplemented/ adjusted where necessary if more relevant information comes to light.

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