



Work Safety Alert Fallen into a Refuse Chute

1. **Date of Accident :** January 2021
2. **Place of Accident :** A residential building
3. **Summary :**

A cleaning worker while dumping refuse into a refuse chute on 35/F of a residential building fell through the chute opening and plunged to death into a refuse trolley in the refuse collection room on G/F.

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

To prevent any workers/ employees from falling into refuse chutes, proprietors/ employers engaged in any work involving refuse chutes in buildings should provide and maintain a safe system of work which should include, but not limited to, the following:

- appointing 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 position and size of refuse chute openings, particularly the hazard of falling into the refuse chutes;
- formulating safe work methods and procedures for the work with due regard to the results of risk assessments, the requirements of safety legislation and safety guidelines to minimise the risks exposed to the workers/ employees;
- ensuring that the refuse chutes are safe in design and construction and kept in good conditions so as to safeguard the safety at work of the workers/ employees using the refuse chutes;
- ensuring that the size of refuse chute openings is as small as possible and that the effective size of the openings for collecting refuse into refuse chutes should not be more than 350 mm x 250 mm;



- ensuring that workers/ employees would not perform work on the raised dumping areas, if any, and not lean forward or put their heads into the chutes while dumping refuse into the refuse chutes;
- where clearing of blockage of a refuse chute is required, among others,
 - ensuring that the work is only conducted by a trained worker under the immediate supervision of a supervisor;
 - ensuring that the worker is wearing suitable fall arresting equipment attached to a secure anchorage;
 - ensuring the availability of sufficient fall arresting equipment and anchorages on spot;
 - ensuring the work is done with the use of a metal/ wooden rod of at least 150 cm long;
 - ensuring that the worker would stop work immediately and ask for assistance when emergency situation arises;
- posting up written notices to remind workers/ employees to observe respective safety rules at work;
- ensuring every refuse room is locked when not in use and written notices are posted up to remind workers/ employees to lock the rooms after work;
- providing all workers/ employees concerned with the necessary safety information, instruction and training, and ensuring that they are familiar with the safe work procedures and safety measures; and
- establishing and implementing 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

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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