

OHS update

June 2015

Do your Handrails/ Edge Protection Systems comply?



Are your handrails up to standard? Do the components of the fabricated edge protection system used on your job that you, all your mates, and all workers on your site rely so heavily on to keep from falling off live edges – comply with the Australian Standards?

If the answers to these questions are 'I'm not sure...' or 'I don't know...' - then there could be a problem – a big problem – with the potential to maim and/or kill.

The Australian Standard for Edge Protection AS/NZS 4994.1:2009 (Clause 2.2.2) clearly states that '... where the wall thickness is less than 2.5mm and the section has been subject to fabrication that includes welding, the component shall be hot-

dip galvanised... This is to ensure that the components that make up the handrail/edge protection system are structurally sound and won't break or give way, if and when a force or load is applied to them (such as leaning against them). While 'brand new' temporary edge protection systems may shine and 'do the job', the older they get and the more they are used, the more susceptible they are to failure - especially if the requirements in the Standards have not been met.

The other Australian Standard for Temporary Edge Protection - AS/NZS 4994.3:2010, clearly states that there needs to be a thorough inspection to make sure that the supplier's instructions have been compiled with, when the erection of the handrail system is undertaken. It also requires a full Handover Certificate (similar to a Scaffold Handover Certificate) once the system has been installed. This handover certificate must be available on site (Clause 5.3).

Reinspections of the Temporary Edge Protection System must also occur if it has been altered or damaged in any way. Clause 6.2 AS 4994.3 also states that '...prefabricated components of temporary edge protection shall be maintained to conform to the original specifications, in particular structural capability, material and physical shape...'

Of course, that's nothing new. In general terms, our own Plant Regulations requires a full maintenance and inspection regime to be carried out on all types of 'plant'. And proof of this 'maintenance and inspection' regime is vital, to make sure the Temporary Edge Protection System on your job is able to do 'the job' it's designed, manufactured and erected to do.

Make sure the Temporary Edge Protection System on your job is safe. Call your organiser and/or the CFMEU OHS&E Unit if you're in any doubt.

Safety is union business.
Stand up. Speak out. Come home.