

ETU OHS REPS NEWSLETTER



SCAFFOLDING—SAFE USE

Scaffolding has been in the news of late, with the much publicised collapse in Commercial Road Prahran on the 24th February.

There was also the news that Castlereagh Street in central Sydney was closed to pedestrians and vehicles for a period of time, as engineers worked to secure scaffolding which began to collapse on the 26th February. There was some risk that the scaffold, which buckled about 2.30 pm, would fall to street level.

Persons who erect scaffold fall into one of two categories, competent or licensed. In Victoria, as defined by the OHS Regulations 2007 “scaffolding means the erection, alteration or dismantling of a temporary structure, specifically erected to support platforms, if the structure is such that a person or object could fall more than 4 metres from the structure”. So if scaffolding falls into the above category, then the person must be licensed.

According to Australian Standard AS/NZS 1576.1 Scaffolding - general requirements Clause 3.5.1, wherever a person or object could fall a distance of 2 m or more from any platform, edge protection in the form of guard railings and toe boards, or mesh screens incorporating kick plates shall be provided.

Australian Standard AS/NZS 4576—guidelines for scaffolding gives practical guidance for the training and certification of scaffolders, the preparation of sites for scaffolding, and the safe selection, supply, erection, alteration, dismantling, maintenance, inspection and use of scaffolding and scaffolding equipment.

Section 13 of AS/NZS 4576 looks at inspection, testing and maintenance of scaffold. Scaffold must be inspected a number of times during use to determine the need for any

modifications or repairs that may be required to keep the scaffold in a serviceable condition. The relevant information must be recorded in an appropriate register. All inspections, servicing and tests must be carried out by a competent person.

Scaffold from which a person or object could fall more than 4 metres will require inspection:

- Before the first use.
- At intervals not exceeding 30 days.
- As soon as practicable and prior to further use following an occurrence that could have affected the stability or adequacy of the scaffold, such as severe storm conditions or an earthquake.
- Prior to its use following repairs.

In relation to the incident that occurred in Prahran, a preliminary inspection of the latest collapse has identified a number of areas that require further investigation. These include:

- Loading of construction materials (e.g.. Bricks on scaffold bays)
- Work practices relating to changes to installation of scaffold ties outside original design
- Effect of several factors, including the effect of shade cloth, on wind loading design considerations
- Adherence to design specification in erection and use of scaffold

If in doubt, do not use scaffold that appears may be unsafe to use, whether through overloading or missing components. Have it inspected by a qualified scaffolder and certified as safe to use.

NANOTECHNOLOGY

Nanotechnology deals with very, very small particles the size of 100 nanometres or smaller, and involves developing materials or devices within that size. In simple terms, a nanometre is one billionth of a meter. This means that a nanometre is 1/100,000th times that of the width of a human hair. To put it another way, if a nanometre were 1 meter wide, then a red blood cell would be 7 kilometres wide, the difference between a marble and the size of the earth.

Because of the extremely small size of nano material it is thought that it is able to move through the body's protective mechanisms that would normally intercept particles of a larger size.

In 2004 the world's second largest reinsurer, Swiss Re, warned that nano particles may pose similar health risks to asbestos:

"Some nano tubes are similar in size and form to asbestos fibres. The supposition that the potential for harm could be similar would appear to be obvious..."

"There are indications that certain nano materials are potential health hazards. The danger is most probably not of an acute but a chronic nature, and it could be some time before it manifests itself..."

"In view of the dangers to society that could arise out of

the establishment of nanotechnology, and given the uncertainty prevailing in scientific circles, the precautionary principle should be applied whatever the difficulties."

Precise information on the human health effects of nano particles is very limited but some studies on rats indicate the ability of nano particles to translocate and deposit in organs such as the stomach, kidneys, bone, liver, spleen, lungs and lymph nodes.

Many companies are already involved in the use and manufacture of nano material:

Kraft, Intel, Nestles, Toyota, Unilever, Ford, Syngenta, Boeing, Bayer, BP, BASF, Johnson & Johnson, DuPont, Proctor & Gamble, Orica, Revlon, IBM, L'Oreal and over 60 governments world-wide.

Some known nano containing products in Australia include:

Sunscreen & Cosmetics, Food Packaging, Fabrics & Clothing, Agricultural Chemicals, Health Supplements, Paints and Varnishes, Household Appliances, Automotive & Aeronautical Parts, Fuel Catalysts and Surface Coatings.

For more info:

www.csiro.au

www.workcover.vic.gov.au

<http://ohsrep.org.au>

<http://nano.foe.org.au>

2009 Calendar

EEIT OHS TRAINING DATES

10AM -12PM

Melbourne –

Held at old ETU Office

Swanston St Carlton South

April 29

June 24

August 26

October 28

OHS REP TRAINING

Contact Tanya—0393269377 to book into the courses below.

Initial 5 Day OHS REPS Course

June 15, 16, 22, 23, 24

October 6, 7, 13, 14, 15

1 Day Refresher OHS Rep Course

Melbourne

April 22

July 22

October 28

Country

Morwell – May 27

Portland – July 29

Shepparton – September 23

Mildura – November 25