

# SAFETY ALERT



## Rope access fall from height at the Apple Store, Sydney.

A rope access technician was seriously injured whilst cleaning windows at the Apple Store in George Street, Sydney. The man in his forties fell three stories, through a bus shelter where two people were seated, then to the ground.

The man was taken to St Vincent's Hospital with injuries to his pelvis, spine and head on Wednesday night at 8.30pm.

WorkCover NSW are reported to be investigating the matter.

While the exact cause of the incident is not clear, workplaces should take account of the following issues, which will reduce the likelihood of a fall from height.

### 1. **Layout, design and structure**

Ensure that the anchorage layout/rigging plan is correct, and designed for the task being used for. Anchors must be installed to structure that is capable of bearing fall arrest loads. If you are unsure, check this against the manufacturer's requirements and consult with an engineer.

### 2. **Access to and from the work system**

Safe access to and from the anchorage system must be provided and designed holistically. Eliminate fall hazards to and from the work area using stairways, ladders, guard-railing and catwalks. Without safe access and egress, a worker is exposed to falls.

### 3. **Clearances below the work area**

Ensure that there are adequate clearances below, so that if a worker falls they don't hit the area below. Take into account harness stretch, lanyard/rope length, shock absorber extension factors and obstruction below, like bus shelters or canopies. Protect the area below from public access and tie off tools to stop objects dropping.

### 4. **Equipment/PPE**

Ensure that the correct equipment is used for the task. Use the correct harnesses, attachment hardware, lanyards, shock absorbers and ropes. Use 2 ropes and dual anchors for suspended work, with edge protection.

### 5. **Anchorage**

The anchors on your site must be rated and tested to sustain fall loads. Ensure that anchors and other fall prevention equipment are installed by competent installers who are trained and accredited by the equipment manufacturer.

### 6. **Training**

Workers must be suitably trained to work at height and for rope access/harness use. Rescue training and first aid training are essential. Refresher training is necessary to maintain competency. Verify the workers training records and ensure that the training is current, task related and delivered by suitable providers.

### 7. **Inspection and testing**

The frequency of inspection and testing requirements varies by state. This is between 6 and 12 monthly as a minimum for inspection and testing of anchorages. Ensure that load testing and compliance inspections are carried out on time and to the manufacturer's product specification. Engage suitably trained and qualified inspectors who are competent to inspect and test the product at your workplace.

### 8. **Rope protection**

It is critical that ropes should be suitably protected over exposed edges to avoid them being cut off when a worker falls, dropping the worker. Use davit arms or other means of protecting the ropes from glass balustrades or sharp edges like gutters. Ensure that the edges can sustain fall loads, particularly glass balustrades.

### 9. **Documentation**

Testing records, anchorage layouts, rigging plans, emergency rescue plans, installation certificates and a plant register are essential parts of a harness based safety system that must be held on site. This is essential so that workers can be inducted to use the system as intended. Without this, the anchorage system could be misused resulting in a fall from height.

The Working at Height Association advocates compliance with Australian Standards, regulator-issued Codes of Practice, Compliance codes and workplace health and safety regulations. Meeting these requirements reduces the risk of a fall from height.

WAHA is currently developing an Industry Code for system design, installation, compliance and certification.