

# SAFETY NEWSLETTER

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## FATAL FALL FROM A SCAFFOLD

### Description of the Incident

A scaffolder fell to his death from 28 metres whilst preparing to dismantle the scaffold, which was being used for maintenance of a block of flats belonging to a Group refinery.

He climbed over the 8<sup>th</sup> level scaffold handrail and through an opening into the building to find a drink of water. He then climbed back out through the same opening and stepped on a horizontal scaffold tube, which gave way. He lost his balance and fell to the ground.

The scaffolder was wearing a safety harness but was not clipped on whilst he was moving into the building. The horizontal scaffold tube that he stepped on was attached to the tie-back tube, at only one point (Figure 2). When the he stood on it, the tube tipped.



### **Learning:**

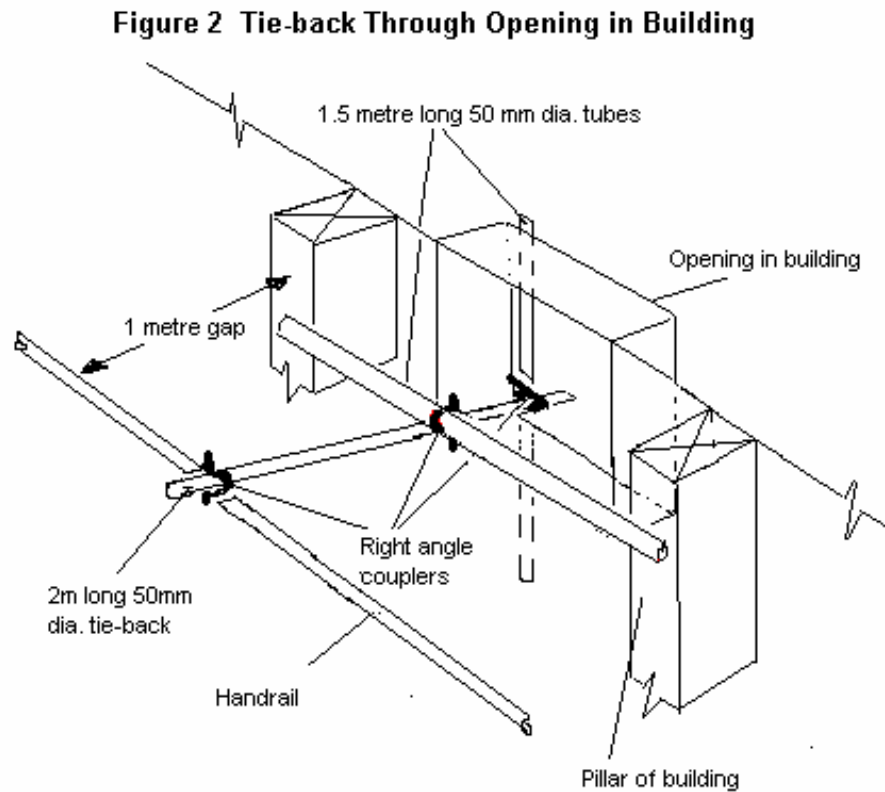
The Tripod analysis of the incident revealed a number of learning points that are applicable to scaffolding control and contractor management everywhere.

1. There is a need to enforce the expectation that scaffolders, and any others who have to work outside full work platforms, must protect themselves from falling in case there should be a sudden movement of parts of the structure that they are working on (as in this incident), or in case the scaffolders have a lapse of concentration. The expectation is that scaffolders be clipped on when they are working (lifting materials and connecting tubes and boards), and when they are moving in a non-standard way (like climbing from a scaffold through a window). It is not reasonably practical that they be clipped on when moving from one working position to the next.
2. Scaffolding foremen, in common with all supervisors and foremen of construction or maintenance work teams, should hold Start meetings on-site with their teams every day, or at the beginning of each job if they do more than one job each day. These meetings can use techniques such as Three Whats or Take Five and need only take 5 minutes. The personal needs of the workers, i.e. breaks, food, water and toilets, are an obvious topic to discuss. In this case the discussion should have highlighted the benefits of providing bottles of water for the workers.
3. Maintenance and construction contractor companies should have a process for screening the supervisors, foremen and other key persons of their subcontractors, as well as their own supervisors. This screening should ensure that persons taken onto the site have the technical competence, supervisory skills and the

ability to enforce the site's safety rules and procedures. In this case the scaffolding foreman did not conduct a briefing on-site and did not appear to be in full control of the activities.

**Reference:**

Scaffolding Safety, Shell Safety Committee, 1987



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