

Safety & Health Circular No. 02/2011

Alert on falling materials (Revised version)

Date: 27 January 2011

Our Ref. : HD(C)TS 4/49/26

Recent series of incidents involving falling materials on construction sites have aroused our utmost concerns. As prevention is always better than cure, I must urge you as the primary duty holders to take all necessary control measures to effectively manage such hazards.

Badly planned and untidy site is the underlying cause of many accidents/incidents. Your role to ensure construction workplace safety is important and all site operations or temporary works including storage and handling of materials should be carefully planned and properly handled.

There are specific regulatory and codes of practice requirements stipulated on protection from falling objects or materials on construction site, and related duties / responsibilities. Listed below are some key points to be attended, which are certainly not exhaustive -

1. Observe CAP59I Construction Sites (Safety) Regulations - Regulation 49 “protection from falling materials” and Regulation 52 “materials kept on construction sites”.
2. Storage areas must be well organized with appropriate stacking/storage systems to ensure that materials are not insecurely stacked in a place or in such a way as to overload and/or render unsafe any floor or other part of a building or structure.
3. Conduct risk assessments for handling, stacking and storing of materials with consideration on the ground, environmental conditions and safe work practices etc.
4. Secure loose or light materials stored on roofs, open floors or platforms to prevent from falling from height or being blown away by wind.
5. Keep material at a reasonably safe distance (at least 1.8 metres) away from floor, roof openings, edges, excavations or trenches.
6. Workers involved in materials handling must be adequately trained and appropriately supervised.
7. Enforce Safe Working Cycle to ensure safe work practices.

8. Adequate protection such as nylon mesh and catch-fan should be provided to guard against falling objects. Regular inspection to these protective fans and/or nets etc. should be carried out to ensure that they are functioning properly (no gaps, holes or accumulated debris..... etc.)
9. Building contractor is required to incorporate full height temporary protective barriers to lift shaft openings as protection against fall of persons and falling objects during the course of construction.
10. Covered walkways should be provided to protect workers and pedestrians where applicable.
11. All working platforms and floor edges should be provided with toe-boards to prevent materials from falling from height.
12. Contractors should prevent materials and hand tools etc. from falling from height, e.g. providing tool strap.
13. Suitable safety helmets should be provided and properly worn by all workers, e.g. fulfilling relevant international safety standard and not expired.

Upholding safety and health is our common goal and we trust you will put your best efforts to ensure that our construction sites are safe workplaces.

If you have any enquiries, please contact The Occupational Safety and Health Council on 2739 9000, or e-mail: oshc@oshc.org.hk.