

Health, Safety and WorkSafe Alert

Falls from Heights

11 August 2011

As per the Department's [Working at Heights Procedure](#) no DEECD employee is to work at a height of 2 metres or above unless their role specifically requires them to do so e.g. maintenance personnel that are required to clean gutters as per their job description.

Incident:

- A DEECD employee fell while climbing an aluminium extension ladder to access a second level roof to repair a leak.
- As a result of the fall the employee lost consciousness and sustained serious injuries including a fractured skull, fractured collar bone and cracked ribs.
- WorkSafe Victoria conducted an investigation of the incident and this was followed by an internal investigation by the Department's Employee Health Unit (EHU).

Factors that Contributed to the Incident:

- The ladder was not secured to the gutter/facia and the base of the second level.
- Use of a domestic aluminium extension ladder– (rated to 100 kg) with a loose hook latch that was not suitable for the task.
- Failure to assess the risk associated with the task.
- Failure to develop and implement an appropriate Safe Work Procedure (SWP) for the task.

Recommendations:

- Schools should immediately review their local policies and procedures for tasks involving working at heights ensuring they comply with the [Working at Heights Procedure](#) in DEECD's OHSMS.
- Schools should conduct a risk assessment using the [Task Based Risk Management Form](#) and document appropriate [Safe Work Procedures \(SWP\)](#) for tasks involving working at heights.
- Contractors who will be conducting work at 2 metres or above must complete a [Permit to Work – Working at Heights](#) and provide a

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relevant [Safe Work Method Statement \(SWMS\)](#) or equivalent documentation prior to work commencing.

Further Information:

- The Department's [Occupational Health and Safety Management System](#) provides policies and procedures for managing OHS including:
 - [OHS Risk Management](#);
 - [Contractor Management](#);
 - [OHS Hazard Management](#); and
 - [Hazard, Incident reporting and Investigation](#) using [eduSafe](#).

For further assistance, contact your [Regional OHS/WorkSafe Advisor](#) or the Department's DEECD OHS Advisory Service on **1300 074 715** or email safety@edumail.vic.gov.au .
