

Worker falls into unprotected pier hole (11 February 2021)

An Incident Information Release about a worker who fell into an unprotected pier hole.

A 46-year-old skid-steer loader operator / construction labourer suffered serious back injuries after falling feet first approximately six metres into an unprotected pier hole on a residential construction site. The worker was walking around the front of the truck when he fell into the pier hole. The hole was not visible due to shadowing from the cab of the truck. A pier hole covering was not in place when the incident occurred.



The site where the incident occurred.

Safety information

The risk of falls into pier holes on construction sites is a known risk and continues to present a significant risk of fatality or serious injury.

You must implement 'reasonably practicable' control measures to manage the risks associated with falls in and around pier holes. Make sure:

- pedestrian and/or vehicle access to the area is prevented, or where this is not reasonably practicable, pier hole covers are installed to minimise the risks associated with falls
- pier hole covers are designed by competent person(s) to withstand all potential pedestrian traffic and impact forces, and vehicular traffic where it is deemed permissible. Fence panels are not rated as penetration covers and should not be used as a control measure
- pier hole covers are installed in accordance with their design, including fixing the covers securely in place and being clearly labelled to prevent unauthorised removal or movement
- pier hole covers are designed to minimise ingress of materials and debris
- pier hole covers are only removed by authorised persons and when it is safe to do so
- inspections of pier hole covers occur routinely and following unplanned events e.g. adverse weather

Excavating pier holes more than 1.5 metres deep is considered 'high risk construction work'. You must have a Safe Work Method Statement for the work being conducted.

On-the-spot fines of up to \$3,600 may be issued for placing workers lives at risk by not protecting them from falls from heights.

More information

- [Excavation work – Code of practice](#)
- [Managing the risk of falls in housing construction – Code of practice](#)

<https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/compliance-and-prosecutions/incident-information-releases/construction/worker-falls-into-unprotected-pier-hole>

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