



# Safety Alert

**INCIDENT TITLE:** Inadequate Temporary Fall Protection Barrier

**TIME AND DATE OF INCIDENT:** 13 August 2015

## INCIDENT DETAIL

A routine Meridian GM Health and Safety Audit found that a pole and chain barrier around an open hatchway was being used in a Power Station service bay. The potential fall was approximately 12 metres. The pole and chain barrier was an inadequate control to prevent such a fall and its use represented a significant near miss event.

The investigation identified that the hazard identification and hazard management decisions taken failed to recognise both the inadequacy and non-compliant nature of the barrier put in place to protect against a fall from height. Pole and chain fencing had been used routinely at this site for many years prior to the amendments in the Building Code for safety barriers. Staff assessing the fall hazard created by the temporary removal of the hatch covers in the service bay floor decided to employ the pole and chain fence and warn other people on site of this hazard via the daily shift start safety briefings.

## PHOTOGRAPHS



## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The response to changes to the Building Code, Safety Guidelines and more recently the Public Safety standards over several years had achieved improvements in most fall hazard areas however the approach was ad-hoc and has left gaps. The pole and chain temporary barrier should not have been available to be employed, clear instructions banning the use of this type of temporary barrier should have been issued. A systematic and managed approach to eliminate inadequate temporary and permanent barriers from site and to educate staff on barrier design and construction is required.

This hatchway is opened infrequently to provide crane access to the lower floors of the Power Station, more frequently used or permanently open hatchways have more robust barriers. There were materials on site to fabricate a suitable temporary barrier for this hatchway and temporary scaffolding had been used previously when this hatchway needed to remain open.

## BEST PRACTICE

Generally, temporary barriers should be between 900mm and 1100mm high, include a middle horizontal rail half way between the floor and top rail, include a kick or toe board and be strong enough to withstand the side loading which could be applied. Permanent barriers protecting the public from fall hazards need to comply with the Building Code and either AS/NZS 1170 or Standards NZ Tracks and Outdoor Visitor Structures Handbook (SNZ HB 8630:2004) guidelines.

## IMMEDIATE INTERIM ACTIONS

The open hatchway was closed to eliminate the fall hazard and the pole and chain barrier removed.

New barriers are being constructed for this hatchway.

A detailed site inspection was carried out immediately to ensure all hatchway barriers were appropriate to prevent a fall.

A full audit of all fall hazards will be undertaken to ensure compliance with standards.

This Safety Alert is issued by the Corporate Safety & Health Team. For further information please contact:

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