

# SHOULD WE GET RID OF LADDERS?

New  
Quad Bike  
Safety Labels

Will Your  
Emergency Plan  
Survive an  
Emergency?

Safety Fence  
Vs  
Perimeter  
Fence

Unsafe Imported  
Pump Kills



# What's New in November?

Welcome to the November Safety News.

Ladders are one of our most useful tools but thousands of people fall from them, at home and work, every year. This month we discuss whether we should get rid of ladders.

We take a look at emergency plans and whether they will stand up when needed most, as well as the difference between a safety fence and a perimeter fence.

Please read on for these and other interesting articles.



**Andrea Rowe**

***Stay Safe!***

## Safety Webinar – 10<sup>th</sup> November 10am

We invite you to join us at **10am on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> November** for the second of our free monthly webinars to keep you up to date on workplace health and safety. Gary and the team present short informal sessions of only 20 to 30 minutes on topical issues and to answer your questions.

[Register here](#)

*Missed our last webinar? View them [here](#)*

## SAFETY ACTION TEAM



**Gary**



**Stephen**



**Katie**



**Ben**



**Miriam**



**Sarah**



**Kirill**

# Should We Get Rid of Ladders?

## Ladders are Dangerous

Thousands of people fall from ladders every year, including at home and at work. Unfortunately, many of those who fall sustain fatal or serious injuries.



Unsafe use of ladders

## Legal Requirements

The workplace safety regulations in each jurisdiction clearly specify the requirements for working safely at height.

## Preferred Options for Work at Height

The hierarchy of control (eg Vic OHS Reg 44 and WHS Reg 78) for working at height requires us to:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Do the task from ground level if possible** eg use extendable pole to wash windows or change screw-in lights;  
or if not reasonably practicable;
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Complete task from a solid construction** eg scaffolding;  
or
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Use a passive fall prevention system** eg harness with short tether so worker cannot reach the edge and fall; or
- 4<sup>th</sup> Use a work positioning system** eg scissor lift or boom elevator;  
or
- 5<sup>th</sup> Use safety harness** fall arrest system; and if all the above are not reasonably practical then you may;
- 6<sup>th</sup> Use a fixed or portable ladder (incl. >2m high),** with safety precautions.

Therefore, use of tall portable or fixed ladders is not in breach of workplace safety legislation, but they are the least preferred method.

As a result of recognizing the risks, many best practice organisations have started to remove ladders from work areas.

## Ladders are Not Work Platforms

Traditionally people worked from ladders, but today they should be viewed only as a means to access a work area.

Workers cannot work from ladders if the task requires two hands as we must always have 3 points of contact when on a ladder eg two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand.



Ladder / stair systems with safer platform to work from



Examples of attachments to help make ladders safer to use

Instead of banning ladders we should focus on replacing traditional ladders with safer and more efficient systems where possible.

**For more information on this topic or a copy of our Fact Sheet on Causes of Ladder Accidents & How to Prevent Them call on 03 8544 4300 or [email us](#).**

**[Click here](#) for our associated blog  
"Can We Use a Domestic Ladder at work?"**





# Will Your Emergency Plan Survive an Emergency?

We all know that as part of our obligations to manage risks to health and safety in a workplace we need to have an emergency management plan in place which:

1. Assesses likely emergency threats to the site, organisation and staff.
2. Outlines controls to reduce the likelihood of those threats arising.
3. Outlines response procedure in the event the threat does occur.
4. Is periodically tested to ensure it remains current and staff can implement the response procedures as required.

However, recently an organisation we work with found that whilst they had all the above elements in place and were confident in their emergency response plan, once an emergency actually occurred the plan “wasn’t worth the paper it was written on”.

---

**The plan “wasn’t worth the paper it was written on”.**

---

The reason was the emergency itself took out multiple staff and critical members of the organisation, either through injury or being unable to attend the site.

As such the remaining staff did not have the expertise or physical resources to implement the response plan as written, costing time, money and greatly delaying their ability to control the emergency resulting in additional injuries to staff.

## So, how robust is your plan?

Whilst having a plan in place is a great step, it is not enough to ensure you’re ready for when an emergency occurs.

Undergoing regular scenario testing, both desktop simulated and physical drill, with thorough assessment and evaluation will help to properly test your plan for weaknesses or gaps.

This will assist in identifying where things can go wrong and help ensure your organisation can respond to the emergency when it arises, even when the plan itself is impacted.

**Safety Action have undertaken numerous scenario simulations for organisations to assist them with this process.**

**Contact us on 03 8544 4300 or via [email](#) for more information.**

# Fine for Falsifying Safety Records

A Qld supervisor has narrowly avoided 6 months jail and a fine up to \$70,000, after being found guilty of falsifying workplace competency records. He escaped with a relatively small \$3,000 fine.

The court heard the supervisor allowed a 21-year-old new excavator operator to see and copy the answers for the site safety induction test, and recorded the worker as competent without observing him operate a loader or excavator.

SAMPLE SKILLS MATRIX						
NAME	PLANT ITEMS	Lathe Type A	Lathe Type B	Pedestal Grinder	Large 300mm Angle Grinder	Chainsaw
Bob Builder		X	X	✓	X	X
John Smith		✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Fred Bear		✓	X	✓	✓	X

Tragically, the young worker died in an accident at the workplace 3 weeks later. Falsifying company records, particularly financial records, has long been a sackable offence in most ethical businesses.

This case highlights the importance of better training for supervisors, including integrity of competency assessments and safety records.

**Call us on 03 8544 4300 or [email](#) for a quote for a safety culture and leadership survey or training.**

# New Quad Bike Safety Labels



The federal government has introduced a new consumer safety standard to improve quad bike safety.

How this new standard will affect farmers in Victoria and for more information on how it relates to the existing Victorian regulation of quad bike safety, click [here](#).

# Safety Fence vs Perimeter Fence

We were recently asked what is the difference between a “safety fence” and a “perimeter fence”, and when is a safety fence required?

This question arose after a business purchased a new conveyor system to load trucks, but when it was pointed out that it had exposed rollers and other potentially harmful parts the site manager asked if the perimeter fence around the whole site would satisfy the safety regulations?



A mobile conveyor loader



A fixed hopper and conveyor loader

Clearly, some people are confused about the role of machinery safeguarding and perimeter fences, and their respective standards.



Perimeter fence with electric gate



Typical barbed wire topped “chain-link” perimeter fence

## Perimeter Fences Protect Property

Whilst most perimeter fences are secure, they are primarily designed for property protection eg to keep intruders out and prevent damage and theft.

Perimeter fences vary significantly because in most cases they are not standardised by regulation requirements.

Indeed, some businesses do not have a perimeter fence or leave their gates open all the time, and this is OK as long as there are no exposed hazards when the site is left unattended.

However, temporary fences for construction sites are covered by AS 4687: Temporary Fencing and Hoardings. For more details on construction safety fences call for a copy of our Fact Sheet.

## Safety Fences Protect People

Safety fences around hazardous areas or equipment are designed to keep people safe eg keep workers, contractors, and site visitors safe, even when they are inquisitive or attempt to gain access to machinery or touch moving or hot parts.

### When is additional guarding or a safety fence required?

- a) Any person can approach and touch harmful parts.
- b) Hazardous parts within reach eg hazards lower than 2.7m from floor level.
- c) Hazard within 100mm if gap big enough for finger access eg 10mm gap.
- d) Hazard within 850mm if gap big enough for arm access eg 120mm gap.

### Key requirements for safety fences include:

- 1) Fence height at least 1.6m eg can't reach any hazard.
- 2) Gap under fence not to exceed 180mm.
- 3) No holes or frame to help climb fence eg apertures to be less than 75mm.
- 4) No storage closer than 1m to climb on.
- 5) Gate interlocked for frequent access, or locked with LOTO system.

**Our Safety Helpline service answers hundreds of questions like this every year for many of Australia's leading and progressive businesses. Call us on 03 8544 4300 or [email](#) for a quote.**

# West Gate Bridge Collapse 50 Years On

50 years ago, the West Gate Bridge in Melbourne collapsed. The events leading up to the bridge's collapse included engineering failures, safety neglect and bad luck. Memories of the collapse still haunt the workers to this day.

**For more information refer to the ABC news article [here](#).**





# Unsafe Imported Pump Kills

An online pump importing business and its director have been re-fined after appealing against their record fine over a fatal electrical accident, where woman touched the "live" casing of a faulty submersible pump.



A worker retrieving a submersible pump

## Pumps Were of Poor Quality and Design

The court heard the pumps imported from a Chinese manufacturer were of poor quality and design, allowing among other things internal wires to be tangled and sometimes break their connections.

The pump business and director claimed they had been assured the pumps met European Standards, but could not explain how they determined they met Australian Standards.

## China Export CE Mark

We previously reported that Chinese manufacturers have started using a "CE" mark very similar to the European Certification (CE) mark. See Safety News [Jan 2020](#) and [April 2019](#).

It was not mentioned if the China Export (CE) mark was present or contributed to their misunderstanding about compliance of their pumps. In any event the court heard the company as the local supplier takes on the designer and manufacturer duties under Australian law.

## Importers to Conduct Assessment of Compliance

Therefore, the pump business should have conducted its own testing of the pumps, which would have been simple and cheap to identify the faults which caused the tragic accident.

## Guilty but Penalty Reduced

The Pump Factory Pty Ltd successfully appealed against the magnitude of their earlier fine (\$1.2m in 2019) for failing to ensure their pumps were electrically safe and in compliance with the relevant Australian Standards eg AS 3000 wiring code.

The fine was reduced to \$250,000 for the company and \$50,000 for the director.