

# SAFETY ALERT

## Fall from height risk

### INCIDENT

An apprentice boilermaker was carrying out maintenance work on a platform about 15 m above ground when he felt the floor grid plate move. He grabbed the edge of the sizer he was working on and pulled himself to safety. As he did so, the floor grid plate dislodged and fell to the concrete floor below.

The incident occurred at a mine near Mudgee on 22 December 2016.

Figure 1: Walkway showing the missing grid plate. Photo: mine safety inspector



### CIRCUMSTANCES

Two boilermakers, a tradesman and the fourth-year apprentice were refacing the hammers on a raw coal sizer. They stopped for lunch and returned at about 11.30 am.

The four were in the process of setting up to continue the work. The apprentice had one foot on the rail where the sizer was sitting. He felt the floor plate move and he was able to pull himself to safety as the floor plate fell to the concrete floor below.

**Figure 2: The fallen grid plate. Photo: mine safety inspector**

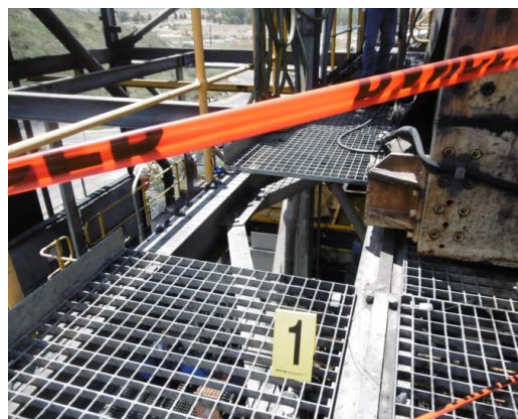


The three other men retreated from the area and reported the incident. The area was immediately fenced off.

## **INVESTIGATION**

While investigating the various platforms in the area, the inspector found that many of the holding clamps that secured the floor plates were loose and some were missing.

**Figure 4 (left): loose holding clamp. Figure 5 (right): the walkway. Photos: mine safety inspector**



The inspector also found that the adjacent floor plates to the one that had fallen had also moved. This meant that the edges of the plates were only sitting on the supporting beam.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Mines with infrastructure that use these types of floor plates should:

- conduct full audits of all floor plates in all areas where they are used to ensure that the holding clamps are secure and tight
- implement an inspection and maintenance program so that all floor plate holding clamps are inspected, all issues are resolved, and holding clamps are tightened based on a periodic, work order-based timeframe determined by a risk assessment
- investigate, in conjunction with the original equipment manufacturer(s) of the floor plates and holding clamp system, further engineering improvements that may improve the floor plate security from the risk of dislodgement and fall from height, particularly in areas prone to vibration
- consider inspecting the security of floor plates and holding clamps in work crews' hazard identification checks when working on platforms carrying out major maintenance tasks.

Mine operators are advised of their obligations under WH&S Act 2011 clause 19 (3), set out here: *A person conducting a business or undertaking must ensure, so far as is reasonable practicable:*

- (a) The provision and maintenance of a work environment without risks to health and safety*
- (b) The provision and maintenance of safe plant and structures, and*
- (c) The provision and maintenance of safe systems of work.*

**NOTE:** Please ensure **all relevant people** in your organisation receive a copy of this safety alert, and are informed of its content and recommendations. This safety alert should be processed in a systematic manner through the mine's information and communication process. It should also be placed on the mine's notice board.

### Issued by

**Dave McLean**

**Chief Inspector of Mines**

**Appointed pursuant to Work Health & Safety (Mines and Petroleum Sites) Act 2013**

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