

Notification of fatal fall from height whilst working on power pole

17 July 2024

Details of incident

On Monday 13 May 2024, a lineworker working aloft on a timber pole, fell, sustaining fatal injuries. The worker accessed the timber pole and work area via a ladder. Prior to the fall, the worker was working near the top of the pole removing isolated redundant mains and apparatus.

The circumstances surrounding this incident are being investigated by the Network Operator and SafeWork NSW. IPART are assisting SafeWork NSW. If the investigation results in findings that have broader industry application, we will communicate again.

Industry documents may assist in assessing the risks

Network operators must take all reasonable steps to ensure that any work is carried out safely. They are also required to have, and implement, safety management systems to assist them to ensure safety. IPART monitors and enforces compliance with these obligations. IPART expects network operators, any other businesses working on network infrastructure and workers to assess the risks of working at heights and identify controls to mitigate those risks. This may include but is not limited to implementing the guidance in industry documents such as:

- *ISSC34 Guide for Height Safety within the NSW Electricity Supply Industry 2013*
- *NSW Code of Practice – Managing the risk of falls at workplaces 2019*

Employers and workers must ensure suitable risk controls are in place

Network operators, any other businesses working on network infrastructure and workers must ensure risk controls are in place for working at heights which reduce risks to as low as reasonably practicable. Controls may include, but are not limited to:

- that anyone involved in planning or undertaking the work is trained and competent
- that appropriate planning processes and procedures are in place to ensure the safety of workers working at heights
- that the responsibilities, accountabilities and authority levels of personnel or contractors with respect to the work are identified
- assessing whether it is reasonably practicable to use an alternative to a ladder (e.g. elevated work platform or scaffolding) before using a ladder when accessing a location at heights or carrying out work at heights
- that workers are attached at all times when working at heights (as per ISSC 34)
- using pole platforms in preference to working from a ladder or pole steps when appropriate.

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Image taken at site by an IPART inspector after the accident.

