

Risk present in all work spaces

5 October 2017

Businesses need to consider health and safety risks on all structures, even those infrequently used.

On 2 June 2016 a Rangiora Carpets staff member fell 2.5 metres from an unconsented mezzanine floor through a false ceiling to the floor below, leaving the staff member with significant injuries. The mezzanine floor was being used for storage and had not been identified as a health and safety risk.

“Structures such as storage and filing facilities need to be considered for risk and have appropriate controls put in place,” WorkSafe General Manager Operations and Specialist Services Brett Murray said.

“Falls from height always present a significant risk. Even a fall of less than three metres can result in serious injuries or death. Identifying the need for a barrier to protect workers on the mezzanine floor was imperative to avoiding this incident.”

The WorkSafe investigation found that the company had failed to conduct an adequate risk assessment to identify the risk of a fall from height and failed to ensure appropriate controls, such as edge protection or a balustrade, were in place to protect workers from the risk of fall onto the false ceiling.

Rangiora Carpets was fined \$157,500 and ordered to pay reparations to the victim of \$20,000 in the Christchurch District Court today.

Notes:

- The final fine imposed was \$157,500.
- The court ordered reparation of \$20,000 to the victim.
- Prosecution costs awarded to WorkSafe in the amount sought.
- The court suppressed the name of the victim and their role, and the company’s financial information.
- Rangiora Carpets Limited was charged under sections 36(1)(a), 48(1) and 2(c) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015:
 - Being a PCBU, failed to ensure, so far as was reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers who worked for the PCBU, while the workers were at work in the business or undertaking and that failure exposed the workers to a risk of death or serious injury.
- The maximum penalty under section 48 is a fine not exceeding \$1,500,000.