



Customer fall at waste management facility

Background

In November 2021 a member of the public sustained a significant head injury when he fell into the pit at a waste transfer facility. The person was pulling a heavy item from his trailer when he fell backward under the balustrade into the pit.

Contributing factors

- Edge prevention at the site was inadequate. The transfer pit had a balustrade 980 mm high with no mid rail. The mid rail was not installed to allow members of the public to slide heavy or bulky items into the pit without lifting to reduce the risk of manual tasks. However this design increased the risk of falls.
- The transfer pit was 1070 mm deep, and there was a risk of falling onto sharp or bulky waste. A facility employee usually supervises members of the public as they dispose of waste. At the time of the incident there was no direct supervision. This increased the likelihood of an incident, and delayed the provision of first aid.

Actions required

Employers, in consultation with workers at waste transfer facilities should conduct a risk assessment to review the risk of falls from one level to another. Where practicable, the risk of falls should be eliminated.

The following control measures may reduce exposure to the hazard of falling from one level to another at waste transfer stations:

- provide waste disposal at ground level where possible (if this introduces mobile plant hazards, appropriate control measures must be used to minimise the risk to workers and customers)
- install and maintain appropriate edge protection, such as a solid railing or wall
- install wheel stops to keep vehicles away from the edge
- designate and implement customer exclusion zones to prevent falls and customer interaction with mobile plant
- provide employees to supervise waste disposal, assist members of the public and administer controls
- train employees in fall prevention and traffic management
- provide safety information to customers and display safety signs
- install customer assistance devices, such as chutes and slides, that allow customers to dispose of waste away from the edge of the pit
- provide a designated ground-level set-down area for heavy or bulky items



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- consider using modular flat-floor open-faced bin systems.

To ensure the effectiveness of newly implemented control measures, you must review them in consultation with workers. The above mentioned controls when used in combination may provide a higher level of protection than any single control used in isolation.

Further information

SafeWork NSW – Safety alert: [Falling from heights at waste management facilities](#)

WorkSafe Victoria – Non-hazardous waste and recyclable materials

Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety:

- Code of practice: [Prevention of falls from height at workplaces](#)
- Industry checklist: [Waste and recycling industry](#)
- Industry checklist: [Waste collection](#)