

14  
April  
2022

# WSH ALERT

## FATAL ACCIDENT

### Engineer dies after falling through false ceiling

On 8 April 2022, an engineer was on a maintenance catwalk performing inspections at the maintenance level of a building. One of the grating covers of the catwalk above the false ceiling had been removed as part of the inspection works. The engineer stepped on a false ceiling panel below the catwalk opening. The panel gave way, causing her to fall about 30 metres to her death.

The engineer was not wearing fall arrest equipment.



Figure 1: Overview of accident scene.

The engineer stepped on the false ceiling panel that was here, and she fell through.

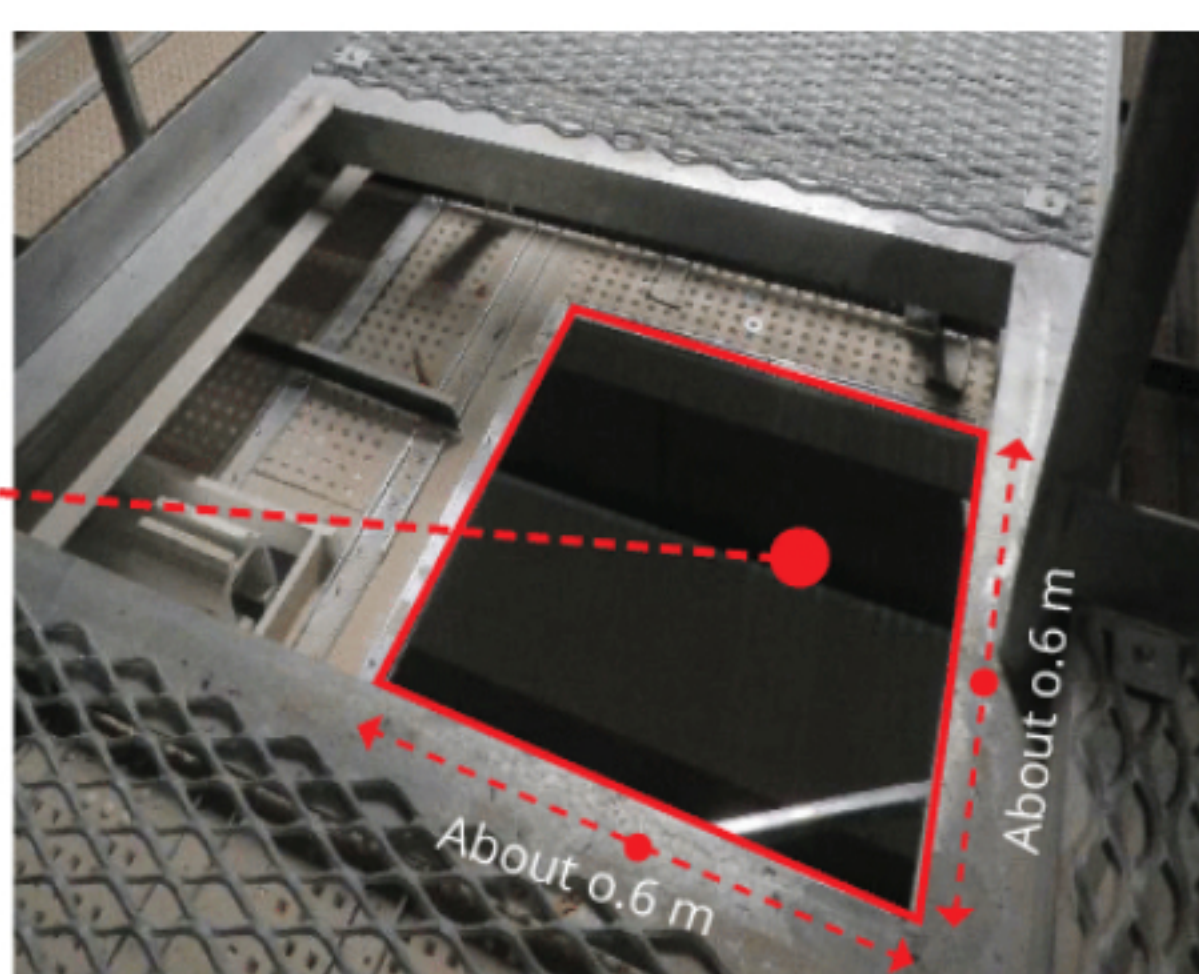


Figure 2: Close-up of accident scene.

### Recommendations

False ceilings are fragile surfaces not designed to bear the load of a person. There was a [similar accident](#) on 25 January 2020 where a worker fell through the false ceiling at a shopping mall. To prevent similar accidents, consider the following measures:

- Design for Safety:** Developers and designers are to factor in design for safety and design for maintainability during the building planning and design stage. Where possible, eliminate the need for any work or maintenance activities around false ceiling panels.
- Safe and authorised entry:** Allow only authorised workers (including contractors) entry into maintenance areas after they have been briefed on site hazards. Instruct workers to stay on the designated walkway(s) at all times due to the presence of fragile surfaces.
- Hazard communication:** Display warning signs at all entry points to work areas containing fragile surfaces. In areas where access to fragile surface is possible (e.g. when the grating cover is removed), install additional warning signs at each access point and clearly mark all fragile surfaces with a warning (e.g. "DANGER: Fragile Surface – Do Not Step").
- Good workplace lighting:** Provide lighting to ensure workers can clearly see the on-site risks and warning signs.
- Fall Prevention Plan (FPP):** Implement a FPP and a Permit-To-Work system for all work at height locations where a worker could fall more than 3 metres. Equip each worker with travel restraints or fall arrest equipment and ensure they are anchored when working near a fragile surface.

For more information, refer to the WSH (Design for Safety) Regulations 2015, WSH Council's [Code of Practice for Working Safely at Heights](#) and Building Construction Authority's [Design for Maintainability Guide](#).

\* Information on the accident is based on preliminary investigations by the Ministry of Manpower as at 12 April 2022. This may be subject to change as investigations are still on-going. Please also note that the recommendations provided here are not exhaustive and they are meant to enhance workplace safety and health so that a recurrence may be prevented. The information and recommendations provided are not to be construed as implying liability on any party nor should it be taken to encapsulate all the responsibilities and obligations under the law.

**Workplace injuries tend to rise around this time of the year. Remain vigilant against risks and prevent accidents.**

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