

19
January
2023

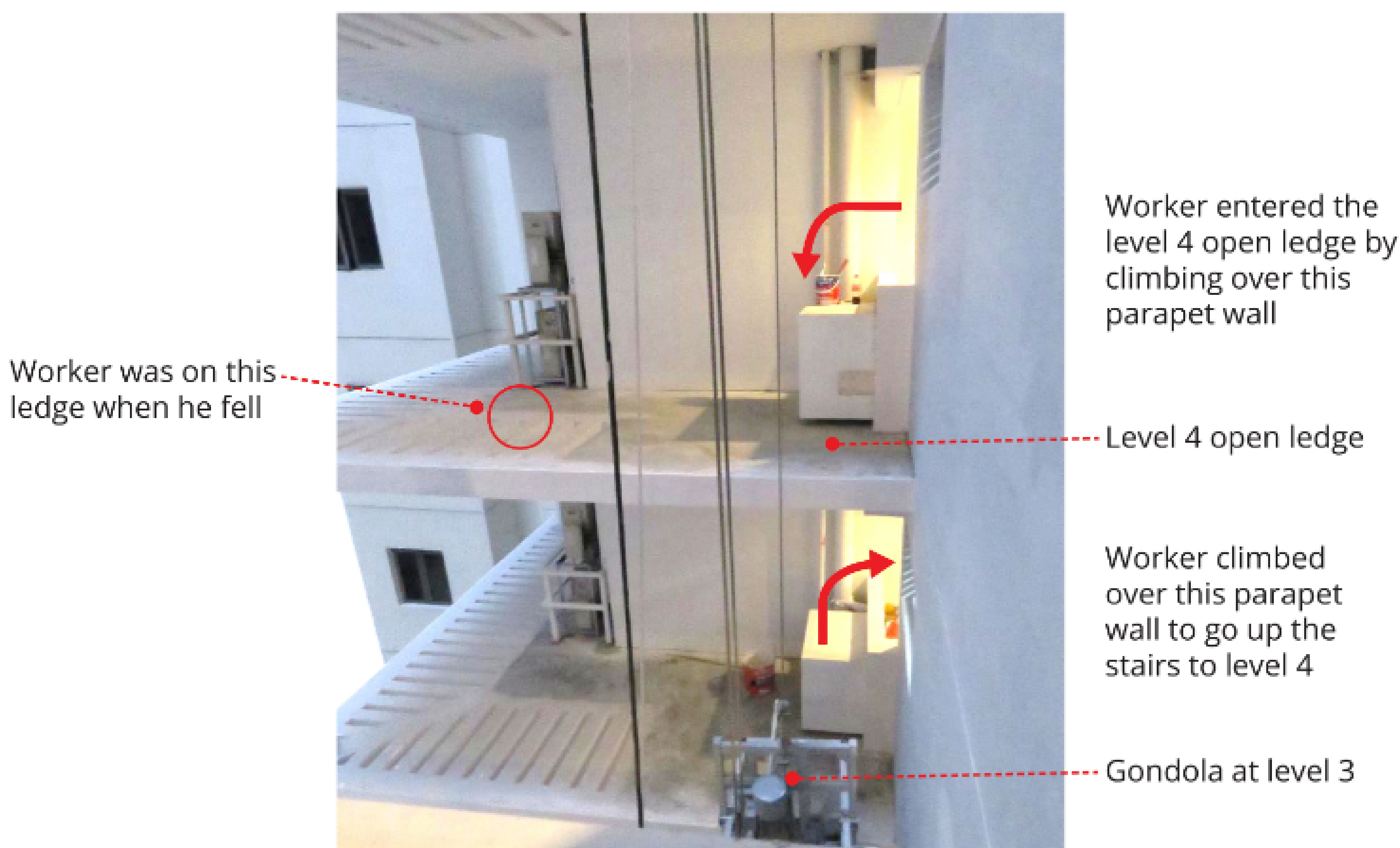
WSH ALERT

FATAL ACCIDENT

Worker dies after falling from a ledge

On 12 January 2023, a worker was carrying out façade painting works at a condominium using a suspended scaffold (gondola). He stepped out of the gondola at level 3 and climbed over the parapet wall to use the stairs to reach level 4. He then climbed onto the open ledge on level 4. While working on the ledge, he fell and landed in the basement. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

The worker was wearing a body harness but it was not anchored.



Scene of the accident.

Façade painting or cleaning works are high-risk activities commonly carried out using gondolas and rope access. The WSH Council calls on all companies involved in façade painting or cleaning works to undertake an urgent assessment of their safety measures to prevent falls from height.

What companies should do

Companies should urgently assess and ensure that their WSH management system includes the following measures or checks:

- Safe use of gondolas:** Instruct workers never to climb in or out of the gondola unless it is at rest, on the ground, or at a level that allows safe entry or exit. While in the gondola, each worker must put on a safety harness secured to an independent vertical lifeline.
- Safe working on ledges:** Confirm with the building occupier or principal that the ledges are load bearing and able to support the weight of workers and their equipment. Check for fragile surfaces and openings on the ledge. Install temporary edge protection (e.g. guardrails) at all open sides. If this is not possible, implement a fall prevention plan and permit-to-work system for all work at height activities where a worker could fall more than three metres. Provide anchor points or lifelines to which fall arrest equipment or travel restraints can be secured.
- Competent workers:** Deploy only workers who have received adequate WSH training for working at height. Emphasise to workers the importance of achieving 100% tie-off at all times whenever there is a risk of falling from height.
- Hazard communication:** Employers must communicate to workers (e.g. during daily toolbox meetings) the hazards in the designated work area and the risk controls in place before starting work.

MCSTs of residential and commercial properties are also expected to check that contractors doing works at height (such as painting works) within their properties implement the above measures. In addition, MCSTs should adopt the following:

- Hazard communication:** The building occupier or principal must brief contractors on the worksite hazards and verify that risk controls have been implemented effectively before allowing contractors to start work.
- Use of technology:** Consider the use of robots for façade painting or cleaning works to eliminate the need for works at height.

For more information, refer to the [WSH \(Scaffolds\) Regulations 2011](#), and the WSH Council's [Code of Practice for Working Safely at Heights](#), [WSH Guidelines on Anchorages, Lifelines and Temporary Edge Protection Systems](#), and [WSH Guide for Management Corporation Strata Title](#).

Under the WSH Act, first-time corporate offenders may be sentenced to the maximum fine of \$500,000 whilst individuals can either be sentenced to the maximum fine of \$200,000 and/or an imprisonment not exceeding 2 years. Read more on the [WSH Act penalties](#).

Relevant parties such as MCSTs, managing agents and contractors may be liable for prosecution under the WSH Act if they have breached any of their duties under the Act.

During the Heightened Safety Period (1 September 2022 to 28 February 2023), the Ministry of Manpower will impose severe actions for serious WSH lapses, which include:

- Debarment from hiring new work pass holders
- Company leaders to personally account to MOM and take responsibility for rectifications
- Engaging external auditors to conduct a thorough review of company's WSH processes

* Information on the accident is based on preliminary investigations by the Ministry of Manpower as at 16 January 2023. 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.

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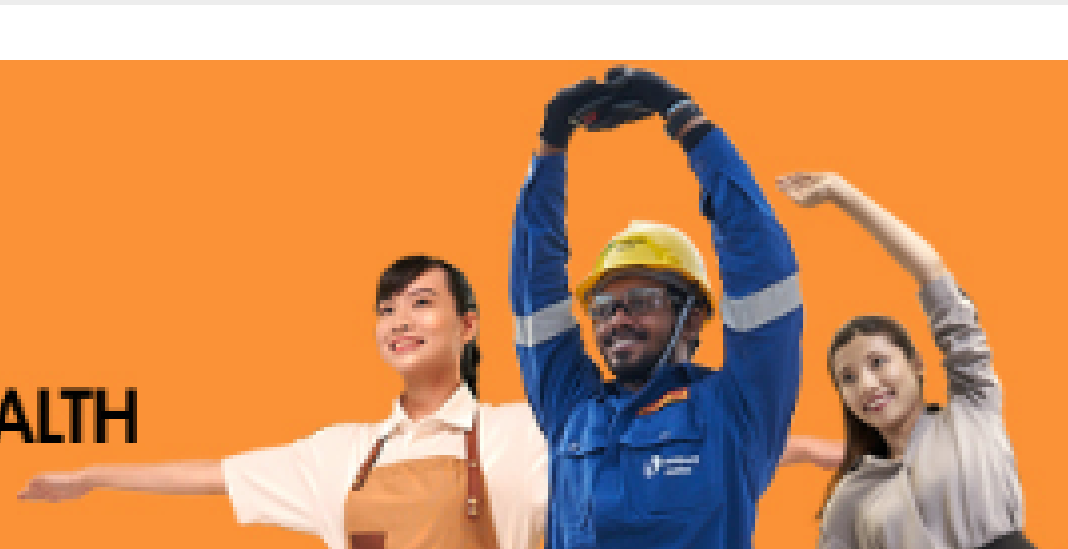
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