

Flash health & safety



March 2019



Water – SUEZ Australia

Site: Prospect Water Filtration Plant, Wetherill Park, NSW

Serious Near Miss – Potential Fall From Ceiling Space

What happened ?

On 20/03/2019 a young worker and tradesman were installing air conditioning ductwork in the ceiling void. The young worker stood on a non-load bearing piece of wood that broke resulting in his foot penetrating the gyprock while he was moving between joists. Work was immediately stopped and the welfare of the both workers was checked. There were no injuries.



Gyprock Ceiling and Broken Timber

What were the potential consequences?

A fall through the ceiling (2 metres above the floor level) could have resulted in serious injuries to the worker

What were the causes ?

Contractor Management System Deficiencies:

- Contractor SWMS did not address specific risks/controls of working in the ceiling space.
- Work clearance process was not robust and did not verify workers understanding of risks

Other causes

- Ceiling joists were 1200mm apart. No engineering controls used to avoid risk of stepping across such wide spacing.
- Ceiling design does not allow work from ground level to avoid going inside the ceiling.



Measures to implement

- Develop SWMS with specific risks and controls for working in ceiling space
- Pre-work risk assessment and toolbox meeting with workers prior to commencement of work to identify specific hazards of the task
- Ensure young workers are adequately trained and are supervised all the times.
- Ensure effective implementation of Contractor Safety Management program.