



associations

The height safety standards AS/NZS 1891 points 1 to 4 have been developed by committees comprising key industry players including manufacturers, end users (eg, utilities), unions, industry associations and training organisations. However, these equipment standards are only one part of a suite of tools that are required to reduce the number and severity of accidents occurring with persons working at height.

FPMA

Fall Protection Manufacturers' Association of Australia Limited

While height safety standards are in place, many of the other tools required to support the world-class equipment standard are underdeveloped and leave significant gaps in the battle against reducing accidents in this field.

While the fall protection equipment manufacturers fully support the equipment standard, they continue to find that at the time of an incident, the equipment — which is the most controlled part of the protection system — is often unjustly criticised. Accident investigations often show that the equipment standard isn't the issue, but areas like equipment inspection, maintenance, selection, correct use and operator training are contributing factors.

With this in mind, in September 2006, the CEOs of the leading Australian manufacturers agreed to form the FPMA to attempt to collectively address these issues.

Association objectives

While the association currently only comprises manufacturers, it takes a holistic view of the fall protection industry, promoting the hierarchy of control to manage risk, with the real desire to have employers 'engineer out' the need to have people work at height. However, where this is not possible, its overarching guideline is to increase awareness amongst employers, managers and operators of the risks to people that have to work at height.

The following is a précis of the core objects adopted by the association:

- Increase community and industry awareness of the dangers associated with working at height.
- Educate the market about the need to prevent people having to work at height and, where this is not possible, to be able to select and use the correct equipment.
- Work with all other parties on design and manufacturing standards of fall protection equipment to provide the highest possible level of safety for the end user.
- Promote education in fall protection and the adoption of skills-based training.

Value to industry

The association promotes the concept that every worker has the right to come home from work safely to their family every night — regardless of their job function — so it's the person that works at height that the association wants to reach.

The association works with management and operators to agree on the regulation of activities surrounding working at height including:

- Correct selection of equipment for the task. This demands a whole subset of activities in training the staff of distributors and resellers of the equipment. The distributor and the employer both have a duty of care to ensure the correct equipment is being provided.
- Equipment storage, inspection and 'tag out' procedures — immediately before and immediately after use. There are regulations relating to documented quarterly and six-monthly equipment inspections by trained 'competent persons' depending on equipment type.
- Industry agreement on certification to agreed levels of competency of operators required to work at height and the validity period of such certification.
- Regulation and approval of height safety-training course material, facilities, participant competency testing procedures and documentation. Such courses should only be delivered by fully accredited RTOs.
- The approach by industry to importers promoting fall protection equipment as 'complying with' or 'tested to' Australian Standards but not bearing an authenticated approval mark indicating both type approval and production batch approval to Australian Standards.

Although still in its infancy, the association is gathering strength and credibility. The eventual plan could involve the formation of classes of membership covering distributors, installers, partial range manufacturers and training operations, all in the name of safety for people required to work at height.

Fall Protection Manufacturers'
Association of Australia
www.fpma.com.au