

Handrail anchorage fixings/bolts

Are the ones on your job fully compliant?



It is no exaggeration to say that anchorage fixing bolts which secure perimeter handrails can mean the difference between life and death.

The CFMEU Health and Safety Unit is conducting a crackdown on handrails. We have discovered many that are incorrectly fixed down, putting workers at serious risk.

Fixings come in a variety of shapes, sizes and brands, but one thing remains constant: whatever type of fixing or bolts are used, if the manufacturer's specifications cannot be adhered to 100% of the time – they SHOULD NOT be used.

We all know that we work in an

industry that isn't perfect! Many of the fixings or bolts on the market require precise installation and site conditions to be 100% fail-proof. Nothing wrong with that – and as workers, you deserve nothing less than 100% protection, 100% of the time.

But if correct technique and site conditions cannot be achieved, or if there is any doubt about the installation and

maintenance of handrail fixings, then alarm bells should be ringing!

Tests which should set alarm bells ringing if they cannot be met include:

- **If the hole being drilled has to be exactly 100% straight or perpendicular** – this very rarely happens 100% of the time on any site
- **If the hole has to be perfectly cleared of all dust residue and particles after being drilled and prior to the insert or bolt being installed** – again, this very rarely happens 100% of the time
- **If the concrete has to be 'crack-free'**

- **If the hole size isn't quite the right size as specified** (drill bits wear out, and are often not replaced when they should be – and this can affect the hole size)
- **If the torque setting on the torque/rattle gun used to install the fixings/bolts isn't exactly to the design/manufacturer's recommendations**
- **Are the fixings/bolts to be used once only, or twice only, or three or four times only? How is this achieved on your site? Can it be objectively and accurately adhered to – and importantly – verified?**

All of the above must be considered when fixings/bolts are specified for use on all perimeter edge protection and/or in any type of structural application.

The difference between success and failure – that is the difference between life and death in our industry – is often small. If the fixings or bolts used on your site have only a small margin of error in installation or maintenance, perhaps it's time to look at alternative products.

If you have any doubts about the quality of the bolts or fixings being used on your site, raise the issue with your CFMEU OHS Rep and your OHS committee, or contact the CFMEU OHS&E Unit for more information.

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