The tragic death of a worker on the Adelaide desalination plant is a sad reminder of the inherent dangers of synthetic slings.

The accident occurred when a synthetic sling failed.

Any use of synthetic slings must be part of a ‘Safe Work Method Statement’ that takes into account possible hazards and potential damage to the sling. There should also be a lifting gear register and relevant paperwork for each sling.

**Inspection**

Synthetic slings must be inspected before each use. They must also be inspected at least once every three months. If a sling is subject to severe conditions the inspections should be more frequent. Send each sling for a proof load test at least every 12 months.

**Look for:**
- Any external wear such as abrasion or cuts and confusions
- Internal wear, which is often indicated by a thickening of the sling or the presence of grit and dirt
- Damage to any protective coating of the sling
- Damage caused by high temperatures, sunlight or chemicals (indicated by discolouration)
- Damage to the label or stitching
- Damage to the eyes or any terminal attachments or end fittings
- Where the sling is covered by a sleeve, the sleeve must cover the sling for the full length from eye to eye.

**Discard a synthetic sling if:**
- The label has been removed or destroyed
- There is any damage to the sleeve or protective coating
- A nylon sling comes into contact with acid
- A polyester sling comes into contact with alkaline substances
- A polypropylene sling comes into contact with an organic solvent such as paint, coal tar or paint stripper
- There are any visible cuts on the sling.

**NB.** A nylon sling will lose more than 10% of its strength when it is wet. After six months continuous exposure to sunlight, a sling should be sent for testing.

**Synthetic slings must be stored:**
- In a clean, dry, well ventilated place
- Away from the ground or floor.
- Away from direct sunlight ultraviolet light and fluorescent lights
- Away from extremes of heat
- Away from sources of ignition
- Away from atmospheric or liquid chemicals
- Away from the possibility of mechanical damage.

The working life of synthetic slings will be shortened if exposed to any of the above.

---

The CFMEU OH&S Unit gratefully acknowledges the support of Incolink. Authorised by Bill Oliver, Secretary, Tommy Watson and John Setka, Assistant Secretaries of the CFMEU Construction and General Division. [www.cfmeuvic.com.au](http://www.cfmeuvic.com.au)