



OH&S Alert!

August 2010

Synthetic Webbing Slings

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 contusions
- 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 ultra-violet 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.



This damaged synthetic sling had to be thrown out when found onsite by CFMEU safety officers recently.

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

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