

OHS ALERT

OCTOBER 2024

CRANE INCIDENT!

A RECENT CRANE INCIDENT INVOLVING A LOAD OF GLASS WINDOWS FALLING OUT OF THE STILLAGE THEY WERE BEING LIFTED IN, HAS ONCE AGAIN HIGHLIGHTED THE HAZARDOUS AND DANGEROUS NATURE OF OUR BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY.

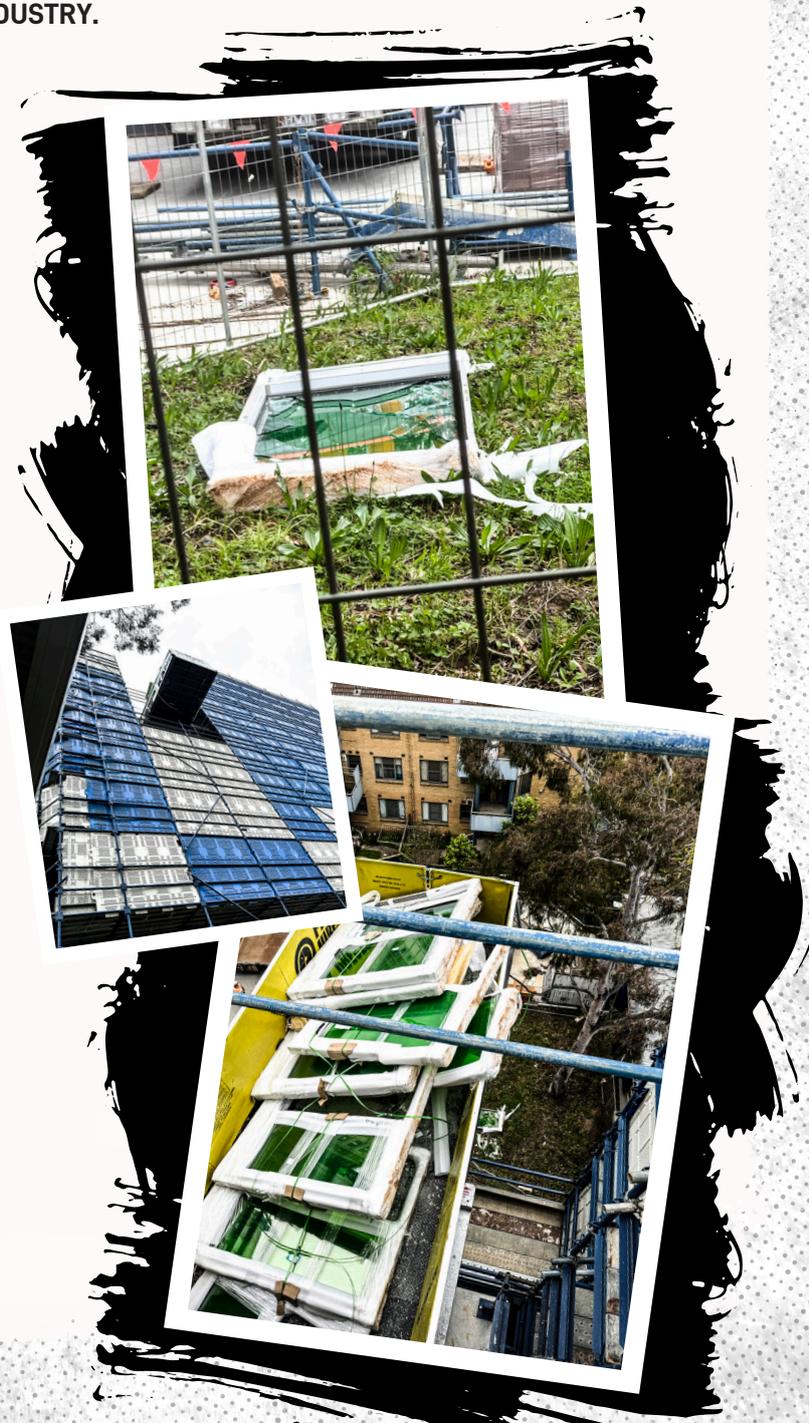
In this case, a tower crane was lifting a stillage of window frames - pre-glazed/fitted with glass windows, from the top of the building (Level 5) into a craneloading bay located on the floor below. The stillage somehow hit the top of a scaffold guardrail, tilted and the result was that the 10 or more pre-glazed window frames fell out of the stillage and luckily, landed in the crane loading bay located on Level 4 of the building. However, one frame did fall uncontrollably approximately 10-15 meters smashing onto the ground - and by pure luck, landing in a "tree" protection zone - narrowly (and luckily) avoiding two workers who were nearby.

But as usual, there was much more to this incident (as lucky as we were that no one was physically injured...) than meets the eye.

The stillage itself was not fit for purpose and had serious design flaws. The stillage did not have protective bars all around the stillage, to prevent the glass from falling out of the stillage if the stillage was tilted at a particular angle - as it was in this case!

The frames/glass had been loaded so tightly into the stillage, that it was physically impossible to fit the chain hooks around the predesigned lifting lugs. This forced the crane crew to "come up with/invent" their own method to fix the hooks/chains onto the stillage so it could be lifted.

All the stillages loaded with the window frames appeared to be "overloaded" when they came to site. The "exclusion zone" around the lifting zone and the crane loading bay, should have been much larger in size to better absorb any errors, failures or unplanned variations in the work procedure. Both the subcontractor and the major contractors' SWMS on the lifting task, bore little or no resemblance to the work that was actually being conducted on this particular site, with this particular equipment, under the particular circumstances on the day.





LESSONS TO BE LEARNT:

- Always ensure that any lifting lugs can be safely accessed and used in accordance with their design specifications. If not – do not proceed with the lifting procedure. Do not attempt to “redesign” or lift in another manner until a full and comprehensive review has occurred with the appropriate management representatives and workers and their OHS representatives. Ensure “official” written authorisation has been approved or given by site management to lift the load in a “different manner” than originally planned.
- Ensure the SWMS accurately reflects the lifting procedures to be undertaken at your particular workplace, with the particular plant and equipment utilised for the task, at the particular time of the lift/s.
- Ensure all lifting stillages are safe, fit for purpose and suitable for the particular task in which they are to be used. Do not overload the lifting stillages. Ensure all loads within the stillage are secured and cannot fall uncontrollably out of the stillage in the event that the stillage is inadvertently tilted or offset.
- Ensure any lifting/landing “exclusion zones” are large enough to absorb any errors or failures during the lift. This includes positive and mechanical guarding and staffing to ensure the exclusion zones are fully adhered to and implemented.

**IF IN DOUBT SEE YOUR ON-SITE OHS REP AND/OR
CALL YOUR CFMEU ORGANISER OR CFMEU OHS UNIT.**



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The CFMEU OH&S Unit gratefully acknowledges the support of Incolink.