

Heads of Workplace Safety Authorities

Appendix 2.2

**ONLINE INSPECTOR SURVEY
ANALYSIS**

*Report
Falls Prevention in Construction
2008*

**AN AUSTRALIAN
JOINT COMPLIANCE PROJECT**

July 2008

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Executive summary

As part of the heads of Workplace Safety Authorities (HWSA) falls prevention in construction campaign 2008, an online survey was undertaken of inspectors across Australia to gain an understanding of inspectors' perceptions of changes, if any, within the housing and small commercial construction sectors.

Across Australia 104 inspectors completed the survey with an even distribution between inspectors based in capital city's metropolitan areas and regional areas. Approximately 50% of the inspectors were also involved in the HWSA falls prevention in construction intervention project undertaken in 2004.

The majority of inspectors believe there have been improvements in the use of fall prevention controls within both the housing and small commercial construction sectors since 2004. This is tempered somewhat by the inspectors' optional comments, which highlights the issue that while the controls may be available they may not be used or maintained safely.

In the housing construction sector 39% of inspectors believed there was a slight improvement and 38% an obvious improvement in the use of higher level controls, only 2% believed there has been deterioration.

Survey results for 'Small commercial construction sector' are similar to the results obtained for 'Housing construction sector' with 44% inspectors believed there was a slight improvement and 28% an obvious improvement in the use of higher level controls, again only 2% believed there has been deterioration.

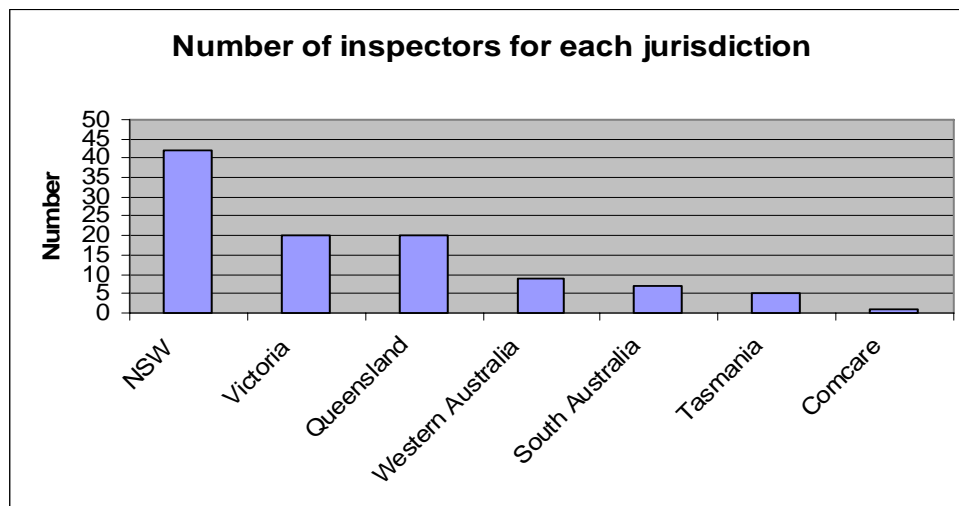
Significantly, approximately 80% of the obvious improvement in the use of falls prevention controls was from the regional areas and related equally to improvements on both housing and small commercial construction sites.

Inspectors also indicated they consider that practical guidance material provides the most assistance to them in achieving compliance and that media advertising campaigns to be of the least assistance to them.

Inspectors by jurisdiction

Survey Question: Which state do you work in?

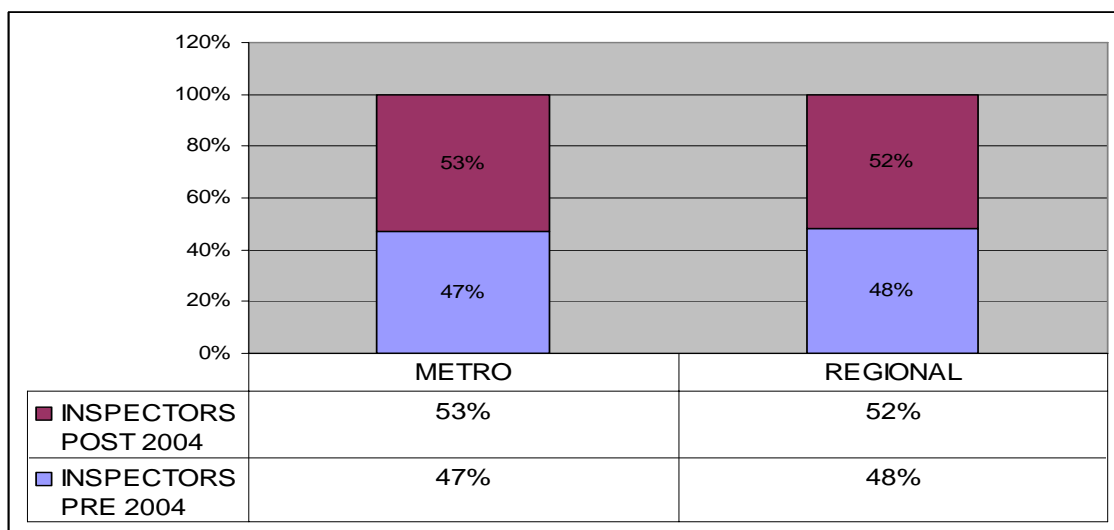
Across Australia 104 inspectors took part in the 2008 HWSA Inspector survey. The most coming from New South Wales with 42 inspectors, followed by 20 each from Victoria and Queensland, 9 from Western Australia, 7 from South Australia, 5 from Tasmania and 1 from Comcare. Inspectors from the ACT and the Northern Territory did not participate in the survey.



Inspector experience and location

Survey Question: Do you work within the capital city's metropolitan area or in a regional area?

Survey Question: Were you involved in the 2004 HWSA Prevention of Falls in Construction Project?



Approximately half of the inspectors (48%) surveyed participated in the 2004 Falls prevention in construction intervention project, with the other half of the inspectors either not participating in that project or were not inspectors at the time. Inspectors from both groups were evenly distributed between metropolitan

and regional areas.

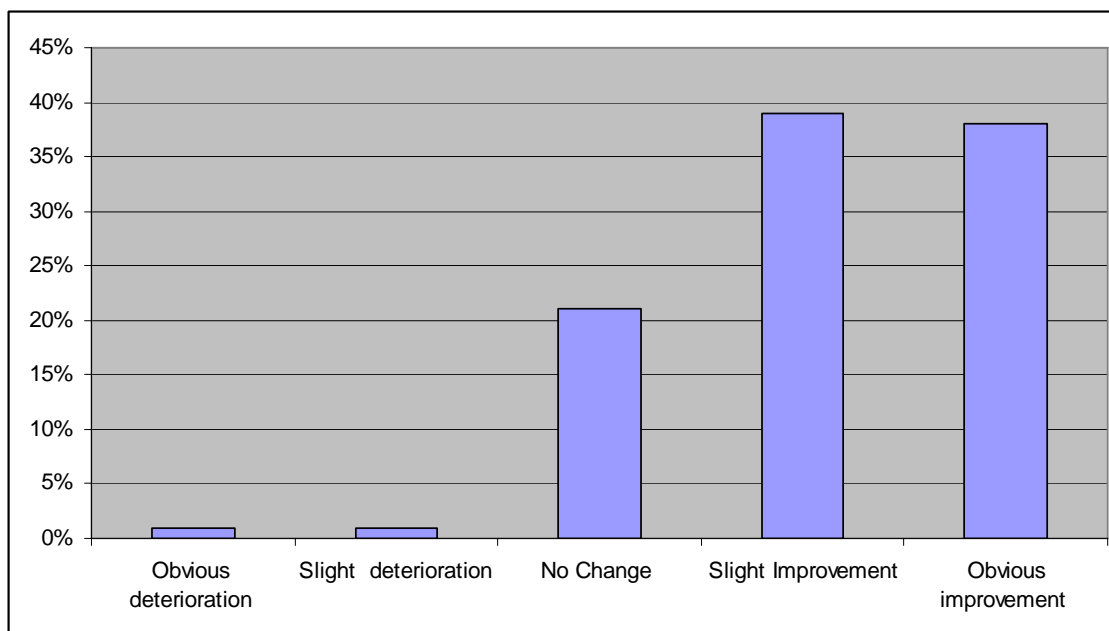
Note: To ensure a consistent interpretation across all jurisdictions. Metro was defined as the metropolitan area within capital cities, whilst a regional area was defined as being outside state capital cities, including major regional centres.

Changes within the housing sector

Survey Question: Generally, since 2004 have you as an inspector observed a change in the use of higher level fall prevention controls within the housing sector?

The majority of inspectors believe there has been an improvement in the use of fall prevention controls within the housing sector since 2004. With 39% believing there was a slight improvement and 38% an obvious improvement.

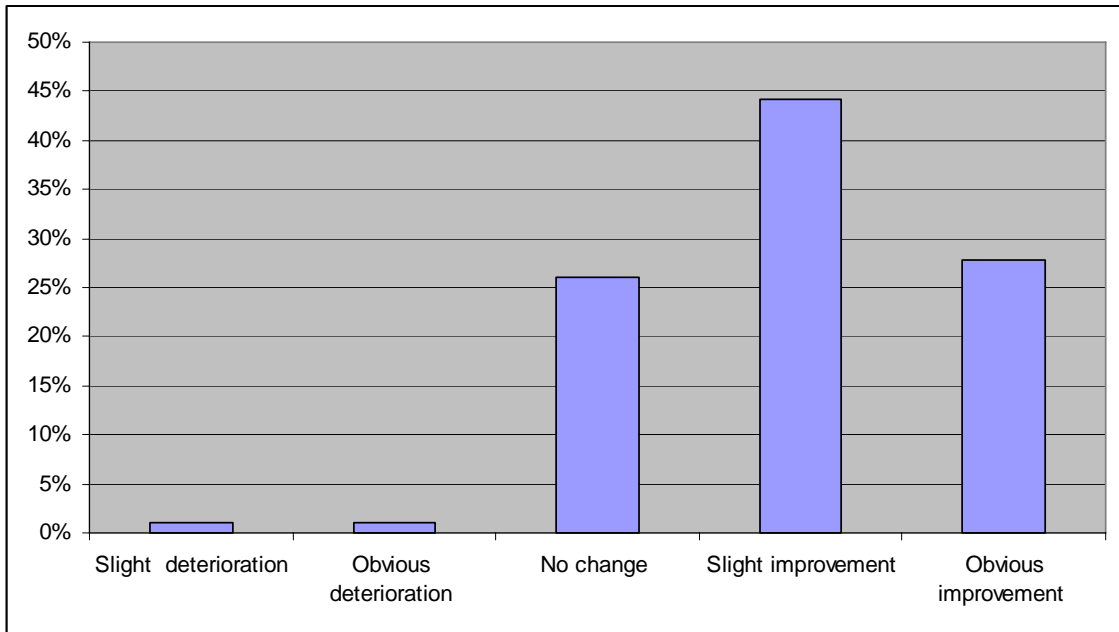
Contrastingly, 21% believed there to be no change and only 2% a believed there was deterioration.



Changes within the small commercial sector

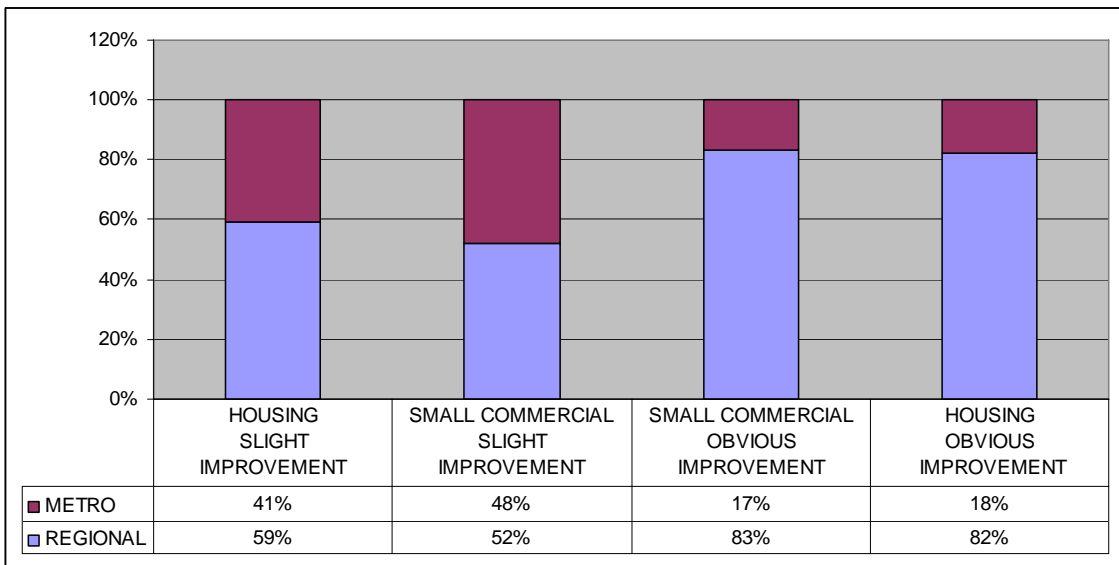
Survey Question: Since 2004 have you as an inspector observed a change in the use of higher level for prevention controls within the small commercial sector (<\$3 million)?

Survey results for 'Small Commercial construction' mirror the results obtained for 'Housing Sector construction'. The overwhelming majority of inspectors believe there to be an improvement in falls prevention in this area of construction with 28% saying there was an obvious improvement and 44% a slight improvement. Contrastingly, 26% said there was no change, whilst 2% believed there was deterioration in this sector.



Changes by location

Significantly, the most obvious improvements in the use of falls prevention controls were from the regional areas and applied equally to improvements on both housing and small commercial construction sites.



What assists inspectors in their work?

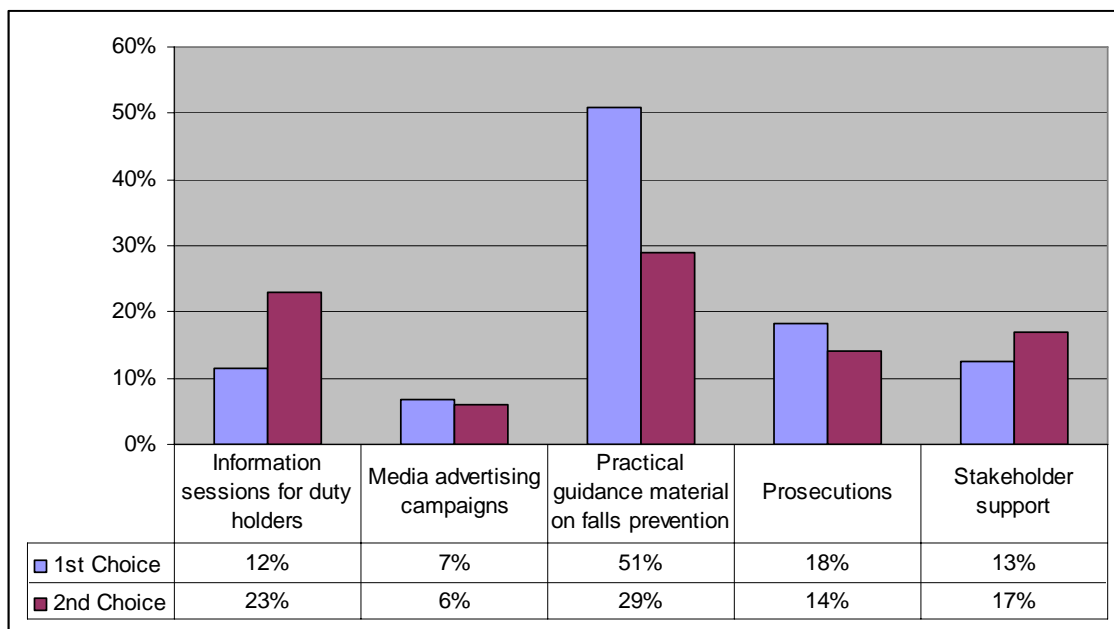
Significantly, overall inspectors consider practical guidance material provides the most assistance to them in achieving compliance and that media advertising campaigns are considered being of the least assistance.

Survey Question (first choice): *As an inspector what has assisted you most in achieving compliance and improvement within the housing and small commercial construction sectors?*

Survey Question (second choice): *As an inspector what has assisted you most in achieving compliance and improvement within the housing and small commercial construction sectors?*

The most effective tool assisting inspectors to achieve compliance and improvements in the housing and small commercial sectors is practical guidance. 50% of inspectors believe this to be so, whilst 2nd is prosecutions (18%), followed closely by stakeholder support (13%), and Information Sessions for duty holders (12%). While only 7% of inspectors believe media advertising to be the most effective tool for assistance.

When responding with a 2nd choice for what assists them in the field, the inspectors' survey demonstrates more consistency across the selection criteria. Practical guidance again provided the most positive response with 29%, this was followed closely by information sessions for duty holders (23%), stakeholder support (17%), prosecutions (14%), and media advertising (6%).



Optional inspector's comments

Housing sector

- More use of edge protection systems over personal harness systems
- Improved guardrail systems
- Increased frequency of controls
- Awareness in the housing industry has increased and with a more proactive increase in compliance more appropriate trestle scaffold.
Less use of milk crates.
More mobile scaffold being used (not always use correctly)
- More use of edge protection and scaffolding in residential construction and the use of better quality trestle systems when pouring bond beams and for other activities.
- I have seen and enforced less reliance on safety line systems and more scaffold
- Additional use of roof edge protection and scaffolding
- Workers are using either scaffolding or roof edge protection. But still many home owner builders taking the short cut and pleading they did not know and not using the higher level of fall protection. The dollar becomes the higher control used.
- Increased use of mobile scaffolding internally
- Increased use of modular scaffolding externally
Increase in availability of handrail and stair void protection systems.
- More handrail, although not always installed correctly.
More scaffold, again not correctly erected
- Greater use of perimeter scaffolds
Less tube & coupler scaffolds being used
Greater use of mobile scaffolds by renderers on unsuitable surfaces (unmade ground)
Lack of certification & training for housing scaffolders
Stairwell void safety has improved however a long way to go with some builders
Bracket scaffold still being used with major concerns on the safe erection procedures
- High levels of domestic construction has lead to a slight deterioration of standards
Major builders often fail to monitor OHS of sub contractors on site.
Sub contractors who rely on the principals are often let down.
- Industry has now produced variety of obtainable safety products like void protection, edge protection, roof guardrail.
Scaffold suppliers have increased in number and are relatively competitive.
Economic solutions that industry adopt are our best chance at long term change.
- More use of perimeter scaffolding
- Significant fall risk continues to be experienced by workers in all construction related trades. The possible exception to this is within the 1st tier construction industry
- More use of various types of fall prevention devices.
- Some of the housing builders are now using edge protection, or other controls measures.
- Guard rails are being used more as edge protection on slab on ground or

lowsets.

External scaffolding being used on two story buildings but compliance in reference to distance from the edge to the platform is not consistent when it should be no more than a meter or no more than 300mm when roof pitch is over 26 degrees

- Increase use of stair void fall protection.
Increase in use of perimeter scaffolds by smaller to medium builders.
- More scaffolding used
More edge protection used (eaves)
More work platforms used as fall protection.
- Edge projection
Improved use of scaffolding
- Handrails for erecting first floor frames
- Climbing screens in Wollongong.
- Greater implementation in major construction
- Slow and steady improvement in residential
- A number of builders installing temp guardrails for construction works over 2 meters when admin controls previously in place.
- There has been an increase in compliance of edge protection to suspended slabs stairways and landings and also the use of fall restraint systems.
- Lot more scaffolding around premises and roof area
More protection in stair voids.
- Multiple instances of guardrail on single storey housing
More use of bracket scaffold.
- Increased awareness, However the changeover of builders makes it an ongoing process. The message is slowly getting across.
- I have noted an increase in the use of hand rails for persons doing roof work.
- Use of roof rails
- Greater application of roof edge protection
- More use of engineering solutions for fall prevention such as guard rails on roofing and use of EWPs
- Guard rails being used by roof tilers
- Somewhat heightened awareness following Falls from Heights workshop and information sessions provided 2007. Improved compliance re: use of scaffolds, fall protection, fall arrest systems.
- More use of scaffolding and less use of harness systems
- Perimeter scaffold to two storey dwellings under construction
- Rarely observe persons working at heights without some form of control measure(s) in place, particularly in the housing sector with the use of edge protection on single storeys.
- Better quality scaffolds.
Better choice of access equipment.
- Scaffold being taken to just under gutter level and double handrailing on 2 storey housing.
- Scaffold and edge protection compliance, Safer use of ladders, Safer use of trestles
- Bad habits seem to continue
- Increased use of roof rails and scaffolding
- More consistent use of safety rail
- More use of edge protection on roofs.
- More use of scaffold platforms when core filling walls

- Higher awareness of what they should be doing.
- there has been an increase in the use of travel restraint systems, but a lack of training in regards to system and a lot of clients do not know the difference between fall arrest and travel restraint, hence the problem with training.
- Use of mobile scaffold is increasing but standards of mobile scaffolds are poor, split decks, poor edge protection often only one hand rail, no access, no rakers for over turning, often builders will take the risk and do the job without any edge protection due to lack of planning and cost, about the same as a fine form dept.
- More houses having edge protection and/or scaffold
- Awareness is high
- More use of edge protection.
- More scaffolding used
- More edge protection used.
- Hierarchy of controls more accepted.
- Risk management a common conversation topic on sites
- Roof rails and scaffold are being more commonly used.
- Greater use of edge protection systems rather than containment scaffolding
Concern with design of systems with attachment to structures, access and material loading points not being provided
- All multi storey houses are now scaffolded and done early in the project
harness are used more of a last resort by most trades and subbies are refusing to work unless controls are provided
- Greater presence of guardrails
- Better use of edge protection
- Scaffold eg: perimeter scaffolding for two storey residential house construction, use of roof rail type edge protection on two and single storey residential homes, proprietary floor void infill systems in use by many of the larger builders
Use of edge protection and scaffolding more commonplace
- Better control measures and more likely to have control measures in place
- Greater use of perimeter handrails on structures as opposed to harnesses or nothing at all
- More rails/scaffolds used on single storey residential buildings
- There is a higher usage of scaffold and the use of edge protection is gradually increasing
- Improvements mainly in new residential construction in, eg: Safe Work Method Statements, Guard rails (perimeter of roof)
- Certified scaffolding being erected and increase in the use of harnesses
- Use of scaffold
- Use of fall prevention systems eg inertia reels
- Use of boom lifts and scissor lifts
- Greater use of internal fall prevention control measures
- More systems for external edge protection
- Ewp's, more edge protection options, more scaffold available.

Small commercial sector

- Work at height training, greater use of fall arrest equipment in EWP's
- More use of multi trades scaffold to building
- Formwork platforms being fitted with temporary handrails prior to installation
- OBSERVED DIFFERENT PRODUCTS BUT SEE THE USUAL ONES MOSTLY
- I believe this area needs a higher level of enforcement.
- Greater use of EWP's.
- Harness and static lines more prevalent.
- Larger scissor lifts in use.
- I have seen and enforced less reliance on safety line systems and more scaffold
- Scaffolding is being used more frequently and correctly due to frequent site visits and checking out their systems. Relaxing the frequency of such visits I have found contractors and builders start to get back to their old ways as costs saving are substantial to them.
- Increased use of mobile scaffolding internally.
- Increased use of modular scaffolding externally
- Increase in availability of handrail and stair void protection systems.
- More and better scaffolds. JSA's developed incorporating
- Developers often fail to meet OHS responsibilities.
- The sub contractors on site are left to deal with OHS.
- Roofing contractors & riggers are the big improvers.
- Formworkers, renderers & concreters are the biggest failures
- Builders and Contractors are tending to keep scaffold on the job longer covering more trades
- Due to cost use of scaffold on under 3 million projects is declining. If scaffold is present, on projects of this nature, scaffolders are not brought back onto site frequently enough to maintain the scaffold in a safe condition
- Rails on most projects are shoddy at best. Every project I have seen for the past 2 years a notice has been served on heights issues more scaffolding
- Elevating work platforms are used more frequently.
- Fall prevention for scaffolders by providing fully decked platforms each lift
- Access equipment
- Use of scaffold, access towers, ewp's and guardrails now as normal practice.
- Mainly for those working on the roofs.
- More guard rail being used on roofs, builders erecting scaffolds for contractors to use rather than relying on contractors to use ladders, trestles or their own scaffolds.
- Increased awareness. Larger companies often approach us to determine NSW legislation. Regular inspections/site visits unfortunately give a different picture with common offences being detected at a consistent rate.
- More use of scaffold
- More understanding of requirements
- More use of engineering solutions for fall prevention such as guard rails on roofing and use of EWPs and better risk assessments to highlight where controls should be implemented
- Safety mesh under the roofing iron is being used more regularly.
- Somewhat heightened awareness following Falls from Heights workshop

and information sessions provided 2007. Improved compliance re: use of scaffolds, fall protection, fall arrest systems.

- More use of scaffolding and roof rail systems
- Generally, an improved use of both scaffold and edge protection systems, instead of relying on harnesses
- Choice of equipment
- Serviceability of equipment
- Better levels of training/competency.
- Scaffold and edge protection compliance. Safer use of ladders. Safer use of trestles.
- They persist in using harnesses.
- Use of edge protection as opposed to restraint/fall arrest systems
- Use of temporary edge protection, and scaffold but maintenance of scaffold is poor.
- More use of edge protection.
- Especially on smaller construction sites the principal contractor is taking responsibility for all subbies and scaffolding is being used for the duration of the construction rather than individual trades fending for themselves
- Greater use of elevated work platforms and mobile scaffolds rather than ladders
- Builders are becoming more aware of their obligations as PC most jobs have fall prevention controls such as scaffold, edge protection or knuckle booms and scissor lifts
- Use of edge protection more commonplace
- Better control measures and more likely to have control measures in place
- There is a higher usage of scaffold and the use of edge protection is gradually increasing
- Certified scaffolding being erected and increase in the use of harnesses
- Use of scaffold
- Use of fall prevention systems eg inertia reels use of boom lifts and scissor lifts
- Ewp's, more edge protection options, more scaffold available.