

Scaffold Board Failure



An incident occurred on a site recently where an operative, who was working on a scaffold board installing lift equipment inside a lift shaft, fell following the failure of the scaffold board he was standing on.

The scaffold board snapped whilst the operative was standing on it and the consequences of a potential 15m fall could easily have been fatal. As it was, the operative fell 2m onto the working platform below and suffered injuries to his ribs.

As a part of the investigation, the scaffold board was inspected by an expert who concluded that the cause of the failure was that the timber contained a very pronounced slope of grain in the region of the break.



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The British Standard relating to Scaffold Boards is BS 2482: 2009. This standard requires a number of elements to be graded before the board can be rated to the current British Standard. This is identified by the bands on the ends of the board having a reference to the British Standard (Usually having the kitemark BS2482).

In this instance the board that failed would be commonly known as a 'Grade A' board because it did not have the British Standard marking on the end plates.

This grade of board is not subject to the requirements of BS2482 and therefore would never have been inspected for any potential strength defects.

Following further investigation and anecdotal evidence, it is reasonable to conclude that there are a large number of these ungraded boards in circulation, and they are being used on many sites in the UK.

These ungraded and potentially unsafe boards (outlined in the pictures above) are in use on our sites without anyone realising the full extent, or likelihood, of their failure and leaving others open to the possibility of further incidents.

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Recommendations:

- Check if your scaffold boards conform to BS 2482
- Consider changing any non British Standard boards to boards graded to the current BS2482 standard.
- In the future consider only providing scaffold boards graded to BS2482 in any contract for scaffold supply / erection of scaffolding.
- Boards should not be used as a part of a working platform if they are damaged in any way, cracked or have notches cut out of them.
- Boards should be inspected prior to being put into use and at regular intervals whilst in use

For further information refer to NASC Technically Speaking Issue No.7, shown on the following page.

The NASC were first made aware of this issue via a Safety Alert from Vinci Plc. Received February 2010.

Published by the NASC (National Access & Scaffolding Confederation) 12/02/2010

