

NATIONAL SAFETY ALERT



WALL COLLAPSES

Two tragic wall collapse incidents occurred on Wednesday 16th August in Sydney. Both were domestic/residential housing sites and both were preventable.

Thong Tran a 30 year old Carpenter and father of four was tragically crushed when a brick wall above him (on the second storey of the home being built) collapsed at a residential housing site in Carlingford.

The second collapse occurred on another residential housing site in Kellyville trapping a 19 year old labourer working on a student visa. Early reports confirm he is currently in a coma in Westmead Hospital.

Wind gusts of up to 80Km/h were recorded. Tragically, both walls were not sufficiently braced or supported.

During construction work, masonry walls (brick or block) can fail due to side loads on the walls, the rate of construction, inadequate foundations or adjacent excavations. Side loads may include wind, inadvertent impacts or leaning materials against them.

Safety is union business.

Stand Up. Speak Out. Come Home.

BRACING FREESTANDING MASONRY WALLS

To ensure freestanding masonry walls are stable and adequately braced at all times to prevent collapse when subjected to lateral forces, such as wind.

Temporary bracing should:

- be used where the height of the wall exceeds 10 times the thickness of the wall [AS 3700]
- be provided from a lower height where lightweight masonry is used or the wall is in an area where wind speeds are likely to exceed 30 km/h
- stabilise the entire length of the wall so it does not fall in either direction
- not exceed two metres between individual braces
- include wall support bearers (eg battens or strong-backs) of at least 500mm length
- be retained until the required elements of the final structure are installed and provide adequate lateral support.

Where braces are required, they should be regularly checked by a competent person to ensure they are not removed, modified, or damaged.

If extreme weather is forecast, ensure that work ceases and a suitable large exclusion zone around any incomplete masonry wall is established and maintained.

An incomplete freestanding masonry wall should never be used as shelter during extreme weather, even if the wall has temporary bracing.

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