



YOUR HOME – BALCONY SAFE TIPS

It's critical to ascertain whether your balcony has been built properly. One way is by checking council records for proof of building approval. Another way is by having it checked out by a structural engineer or a specially-trained architect.

The following tips may also be useful:

TIMBER BALCONIES

1. Identify the species of timber. Oregon is not appropriate for external structures. It is distinguishable by a broad softwood grain pattern and by a pinkish colour when fresh surfaces are exposed – e.g. during a fresh split.
2. Observe for any compression or deformation of the structural members.
3. Test the timber by probing with a sharp object like a screwdriver. Decayed timber may feel soft and spongy.
4. Gain access underneath using a ladder. Check connection points at the beams with a screwdriver for deterioration. Timber generally rots where two pieces of timber join together. Examine brackets and bolts to make sure they are not rusted.
5. Make sure the timber balcony is properly fixed to the house or that the members run into the house structure – not just secured to its side.
6. Check bases of timber posts for rot and again check brackets and bolts for signs of rust.
7. Posts need to be securely anchored into the ground and not just bolted into the paving.

8. Check handrails and vertical balustrade to make sure they are not rotted and unstable.

CONCRETE BALCONIES

1. Look for signs of deflection. If the balcony leans, there is a problem.
2. Examine the underside of the concrete balcony. Peaking in concrete finish, rust stains on exposed steel reinforcing are signs of a serious problem.
3. Check handrails and balustrades to make sure they are not rotted, loose, or unstable especially where connected to concrete.
4. The presence of spalling, where chunks of concrete are flaking off, may be a serious problem and needs to be assessed by an expert.

Don't wait, if there is anything suspicious about a balcony's stability, avoid the area until an architect is able to determine the full scale of the problem.

If you would like to talk to an Archicentre Australia architect about a particular matter, please call Archicentre Australia on 1300 13 45 13 or go to www.archicentreaustralia.com.au