

Colorado Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program

SUBJECT:

Colorado FACE Investigation 95CO033

Maintenance Worker Dies When He Falls From Roof of Apartment Building.

SUMMARY:

On May 15, 1995 a 43-year-old maintenance worker died from injuries sustained when he fell from the roof of an apartment building. The deceased and a co-worker were performing maintenance on a rooftop swamp cooler. The co-worker was located outside the front of the apartment building and the deceased was on the roof. The deceased apparently lost his footing and fell 18 feet, landing on a concrete patio. When the co-worker did not receive a response to a question, he initiated a search and found the deceased. The deceased had lacerations on the inside of the fingers of both hands and a section of gutter on the roof edge was bent downward. He apparently tried to grab the gutter to stop his fall but was unsuccessful.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) investigator concluded that to prevent future similar occurrences, employers should:

- Implement 29 CFR 1926.104 that requires the use of safety belts, lifelines, and lanyards when working from elevations.
- Develop, implement, and enforce a comprehensive written safety program that includes, but is not limited to, training in fall hazard recognition and the use of fall protection devices.
- Conduct a job-site survey on a regular basis to identify potential hazards, implement appropriate control measures, and provide subsequent training to employees that specifically addresses all identified hazards.

INVESTIGATIVE AUTHORITY:

CDPHE performs investigations of occupational fatalities under the authority of the Colorado Revised Statutes and Board of Health Regulations. CDPHE is required to establish and operate a program to monitor and investigate those conditions which affect public health and are preventable. The goal of the workplace investigation is to prevent work-related injuries in the future by study of the working environment, the worker, the task the worker was performing, the tools the worker was using, and the role of management in controlling how these factors interact.

This report is generated and distributed to fulfill the Department's duty to provide relevant education to the community on methods to prevent severe occupational injuries.

INVESTIGATION:

The investigation of this work-related fatality was prompted by a report of the incident from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). The CDPHE investigator arrived at the scene of the injury eighteen hours after the time of the incident. The investigation included interviews with coworkers, the company owner, and the local fire department. The incident site was photographed and autopsy, ambulance, and police reports were obtained from the local authorities.

This company employs six people. The company manages several rental properties in the local area. The company did not have a safety program and safety training was not conducted.

CAUSE OF DEATH:

The cause of death as determined by autopsy and listed on the death certificate as multiple injuries as a result of a fall.

RECOMMENDATIONS/DISCUSSION:

Recommendation #1: Implement 29 CFR 1926.104, that requires the use of safety belts, lifelines, and lanyards when working from elevations.

Discussion: When working from elevations employers should provide personal protective equipment (PPE) (i.e., safety belt, lifeline, and lanyard) to employees exposed to fall hazards. Employers should provide and enforce the use of PPE in accordance with 29 CFR 1926.104.

Recommendation #2: Develop, implement, and enforce a comprehensive written safety program that includes, but is not limited to, training in fall hazard recognition and the use of fall protection devices.

Discussion: Employers should emphasize safety of their employees by

designing, developing, implementing and enforcing a comprehensive safety program to prevent incidents such as this. The safety program should include, but not be limited to, the recognition and avoidance of fall hazards and the use of appropriate fall protection.

Recommendation #3: Conduct a job-site survey on a regular basis to identify potential hazards, implement appropriate control measures, and provide subsequent training to employees that specifically addresses all identified hazards.

Discussion: According to 29 CFR 1926.21(b)(2), employers are required to instruct each employee in the recognition and avoidance of unsafe conditions, and to control or eliminate any hazards or other exposure to illness or injury. In this and similar situations the employer may need to provide additional training to ensure that these employees understand the hazards and how to properly use safety equipment to protect themselves.

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