

Colorado FACE Investigation 92C0065

SUBJECT:

Construction company owner dies when he falls from roof of home under construction in Colorado.

SUMMARY:

The owner of a small construction company in Colorado was fatally injured when he fell from the roof he was standing on. In this incident a crew of three were applying sheets of plywood to the roof trusses of a two story home under construction. Employee #1 (the deceased) was cutting sheets of plywood for the other two employees. He was standing on a portion of the roof that had already had the plywood applied. The other two employees were nailing sheets of plywood on the opposite side of the roof and did not witness the fall. The surface of the work location of the deceased was covered with sawdust. No fall protection was in use by any of the employees and there had not been any safety cleats nailed in place. It is thought that the deceased started to slide from the roof and was unable to reach anything to help arrest the slide. He fell approximately 18 feet and suffered a fractured skull. The Colorado Department of Health (CDH) 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:

The Colorado Department of Health (CDH) performs investigations of occupational fatalities under the authority of the Colorado Revised Statutes and Board of Health Regulations. CDH 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 local county coroner. The CDH investigator was on site forty-nine hours after the time of the incident. The investigation included interviews with coworkers's, the company owner, and the local investigating police officer. The incident site was photographed and autopsy and police reports were obtained from the local authorities.

The company in this case employs three people. The company was a subcontractor on this construction project and had been onsite for 14 days. 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 a massive head injury 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.

Lyle E. McKenzie
Chief Investigator/Industrial Hygienist
Environmental Epidemiology Division
Occupational Epidemiology Program

Jane B. McCammon, M.S., CIH
Manager
Occupational Epidemiology Program

Richard E. Hoffman, M.D., MPH
State Epidemiologist
Colorado Department of Health

DISTRIBUTION:

ALASKA DEPT. OF HEALTH
BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL OF COLORADO
CALIFORNIA PUBLIC HEALTH FOUNDATION
COLORADO AFL-CIO
COLORADO CORONER'S ASS'N
COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (INTERNAL DISTRIBUTION)
COLORADO DIV. OF RISK MANAGEMENT
COLORADO ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION
COLORADO RURAL ELECTRIC ASS'N
COLORADO SAFETY ASSOCIATION
COLORADO STATE UNIV. (OSHA CONSULTATION)
CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION
EMPLOYER OF VICTIM
FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA, EATON DIV.
INJURY PREVENTION NETWORK
LARIMER COUNTY SAFETY COUNCIL
MASSACHUSETTS DEPT. OF PUBLIC HEALTH
MINNESOTA DEPT. OF HEALTH
MISSOURI DEPT. OF HEALTH
NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL
NEW JERSEY DEPT. OF HEALTH
NIOSH, DSR
NIOSH REGIONAL OFFICE
OSHA REGION 8 OFFICE
OSHA ENGLEWOOD AREA OFFICE
OSHA DENVER AREA OFFICE
WISCONSIN DIVISION OF HEALTH
WYOMING DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH