

State FACE™ Fatality Narrative

Laborer Falls through Guardrail



INCIDENT FACTS

REPORT #: 71-277-2026s REPORT

REPORT DATE: April 20, 2026

INCIDENT DATE: June 27, 2025

WORKER: 27 years old

INDUSTRY: New Single-Family Housing Construction (Except Operative Builders)

OCCUPATION: Laborer/Carpenter

SCENE: Residential construction site

EVENT TYPE: Fall from elevation



Image 1. Scene where worker fell.



SUMMARY

- A 27-year-old construction laborer died when he fell 14 feet through a guardrail while unloading a telehandler from a second-floor balcony.
- He had worked for his employer, a general contractor, for nine months as a laborer and carpenter.
- He was with two coworkers at a new construction, multi-apartment complex.
- He was unloading boxes from the elevated forks of a telehandler to the balcony.
- The open edge of the balcony had a temporary guardrail made of a pair of two-by-six-inch boards.



SUMMARY

- The boards were fastened with wood screws to supporting posts 10 feet apart at opposite ends of the balcony.
- His coworkers were working on the ground floor when they heard a loud cracking noise.
- One of them turned toward the noise and saw the laborer falling headfirst from the balcony to the pavement below.
- They found him on his back badly injured with two pieces of railing near him. They then contacted their supervisor who called 911.
- First responders arrived and began CPR. A few minutes later they declared the worker dead at the scene.



CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Following the incident, investigators found:

- The pair of two-by-six-inch wood guardrails did not have a mid-way post for their 10-foot span as required for a span of more than eight feet. The guardrails were fastened to the front of the supporting posts of the balcony using just one two-and-a-half-inch wood screw on each end. The actual thickness of the nominal two-by-six-inch board is one inch and three-quarters, which allowed only a half inch of the screw to thread into the post. One of the boards also had a screw that was not fully seated into it.
- The worker weighed over 300 pounds, but the guardrails were unable to withstand at least a 200-pound outward load applied to them, as required.
- The site supervisor did not check the guardrail installation, nor did he know who had installed them.





Image 2. Second-floor balcony where worker fell from, and failed guardrails on the sidewalk below.





Image 3. Close-up view of balcony where worker fell from.



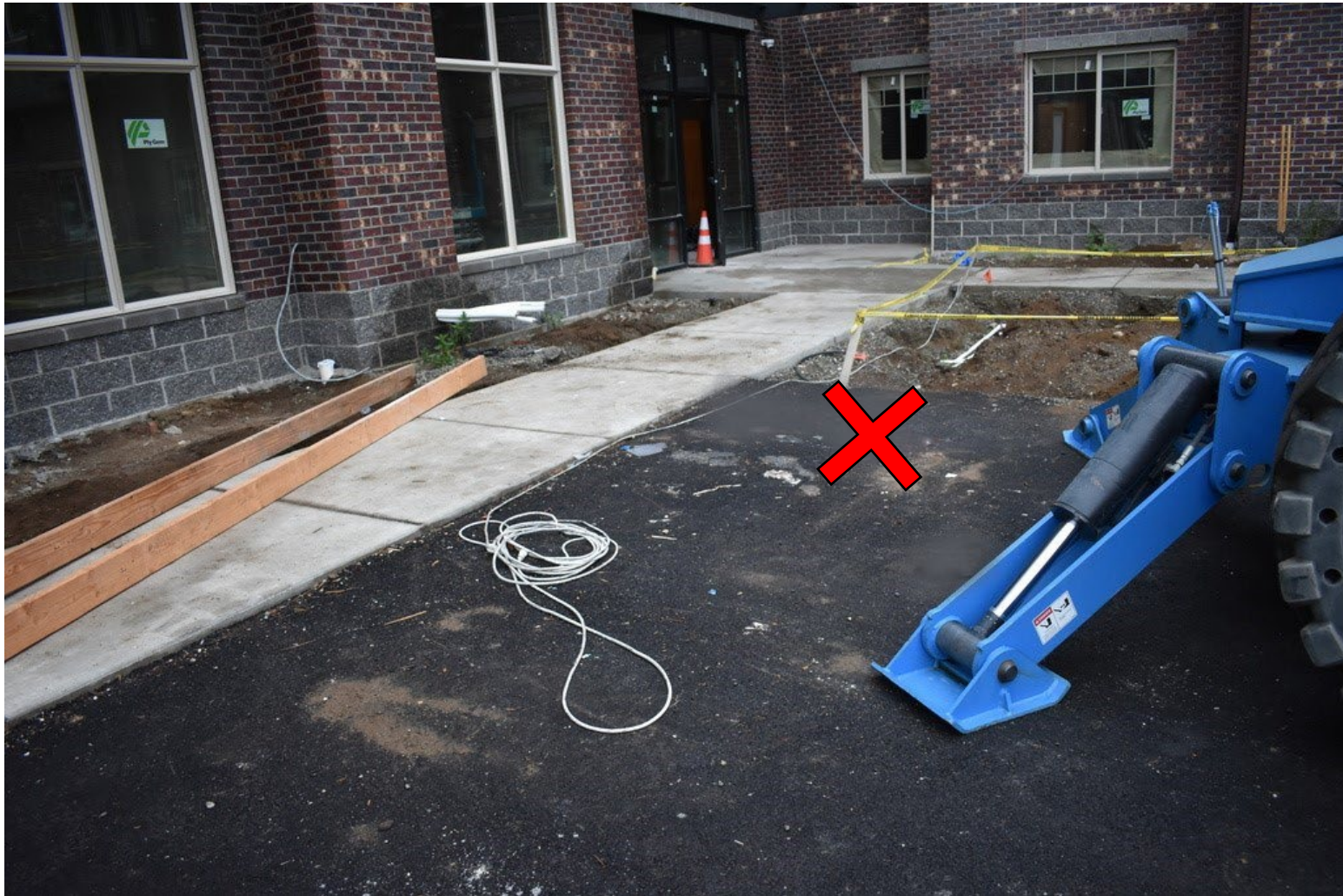


Image 4. Location where worker landed after falling.

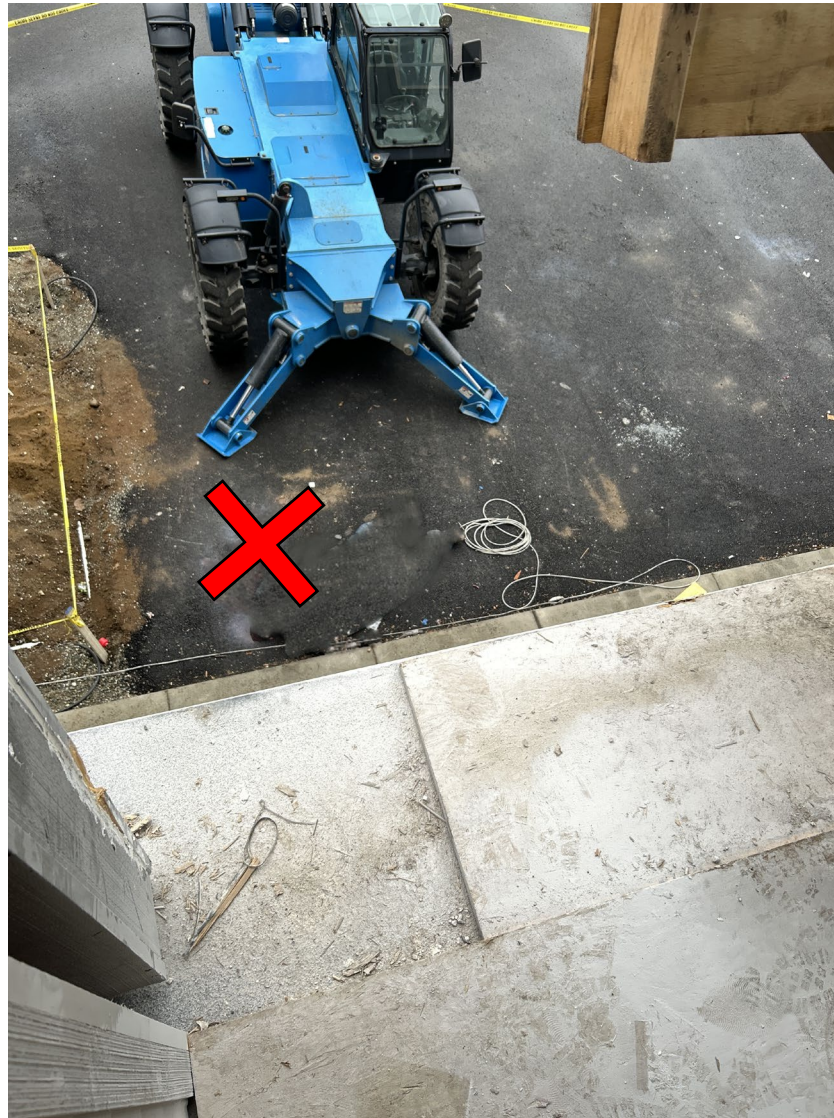


Image 5. View looking down from second-floor balcony.



Image 6. Guardrails that failed.

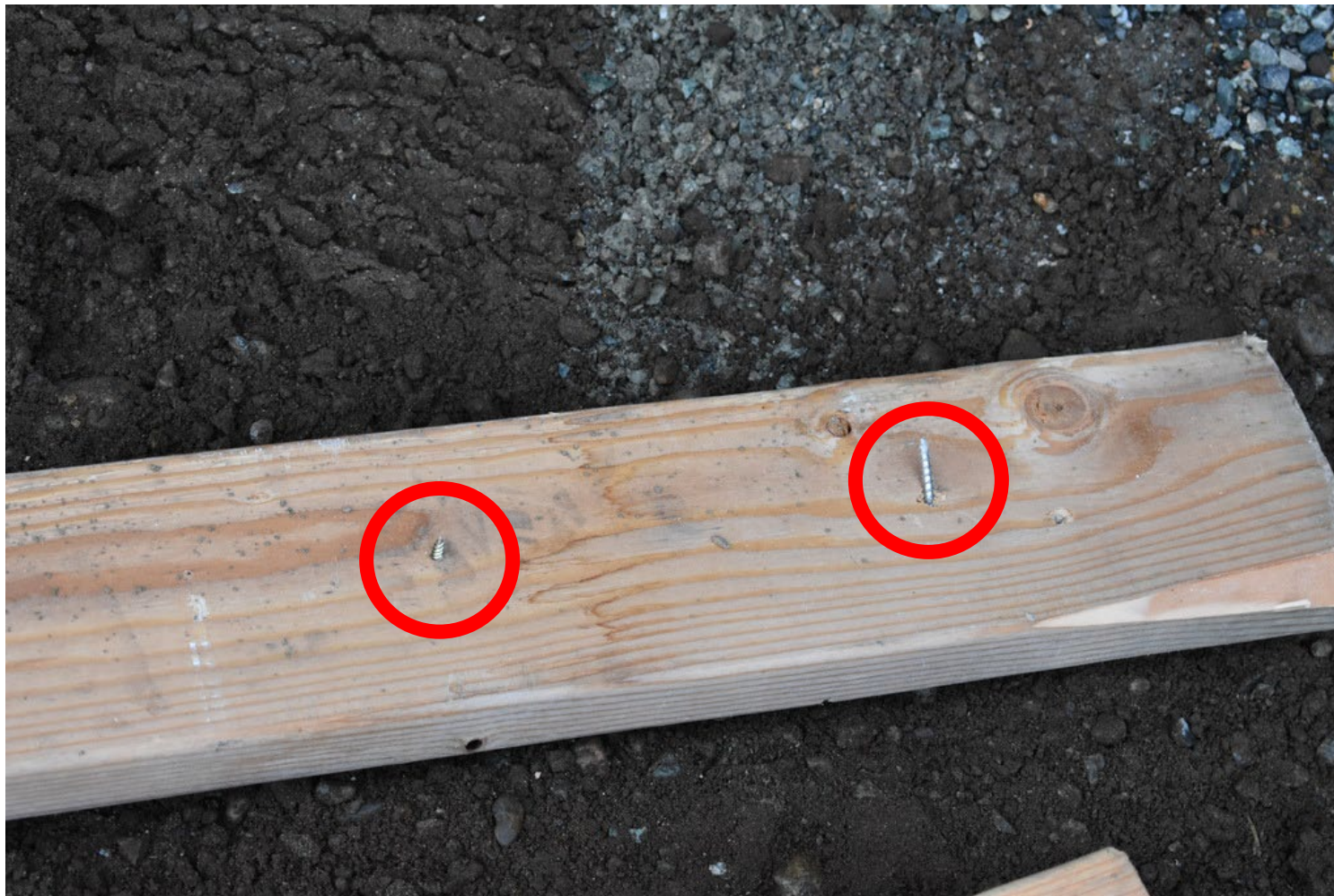


Image 7. Ends of wood screws on failed guardrails.

REQUIREMENTS

Employers must:

- When employees are exposed to fall hazards of four feet or more to the ground or lower level, provide a standard guardrail system, or the equivalent, as specified in WAC 296-880-40005, on all open sides, except where there is entrance to a ramp, stairway, or ladder. The guardrail must be provided with a standard toeboard wherever: Beneath the open sides, persons can pass, there is moving machinery, or there is equipment with which falling materials could create a hazard. See [WAC 296-880-20005\(1\)\(a\)](#)



RECOMMENDATIONS

FACE investigators concluded, that to help prevent similar occurrences, employers should:

- **Perform a pre-job review of guardrail requirements with workers.** Have supervisors review and ensure that workers understand specific guardrail requirements at the job site before they begin work.
- **Inspect guardrail systems before and during work.** Arrive on-site each day before work begins or appoint a supervisor to check that guardrails are installed according to requirements. Do not begin work until requirements are met. Spot check guardrails throughout the day to ensure they are in good condition.
- **Make fall prevention a company priority.** Emphasize fall protection in one-on-one worker check-in meetings, daily crew meetings, monthly safety meetings, annual stand-downs, and company media.



FATALITY NARRATIVE

Laborer Falls through Guardrail

Download the fatality narrative:

https://lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-research//files/2026/71_277_2026_ConstructionBalconyFall.pdf



REPORT #:
71-277-2026

REPORT DATE:
4/20/2026

INCIDENT DATE:
6/27/2025

WORKER:
27 years old

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New Single-Family Housing
Construction (Except Operative
Builders)

OCCUPATION:
Laborer/Carpenter

SCENE:
Residential construction site

EVENT TYPE:
Fall from elevation



Scene where worker fell.

[View slides for this fatality narrative](#)

CONSTRUCTION FATALITY NARRATIVE

Laborer Falls through Guardrail

SUMMARY

A 27-year-old construction laborer died when he fell 14 feet through a guardrail while unloading a telehandler from a second-floor balcony.

He had worked for his employer, a general contractor, for nine months as a laborer and carpenter.

He was with two coworkers at a new construction, multi-apartment complex.

He was unloading boxes from the elevated forks of a telehandler to the balcony.

The open edge of the balcony had a temporary guardrail made of a pair of two-by-six-inch boards.

The boards were fastened with wood screws to supporting posts 10 feet apart at opposite ends of the balcony.

His coworkers were working on the ground floor when they heard a loud cracking noise.

One of them turned toward the noise and saw the laborer falling headfirst from the balcony to the pavement below.

They found him on his back badly injured with two pieces of railing near him. They then contacted their supervisor who called 911.

First responders arrived and began CPR. A few minutes later they declared the worker dead at the scene.

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RESOURCES

[Unified Fall Protection Basics for Construction Activities.](#)

Washington State Department of Labor & Industries, Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH).



DISCLAIMERS

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