

Fatality Narrative

Crane Operator Falls While Descending Crane*

Industry: Specialty trade contractors.

Occupation: Operating engineer.

Task: Descending tower crane.

Type of Incident: Fall.

Release Date: May 20, 2009.

Case No.: 07WA08001.

SHARP Report No.: 71-83-2009.

On November 5, 2007, an operating engineer of a crane was fatally injured when he fell while descending a crane. The 49-year-old victim was employed by a specialty trade contractor that supplies cranes and crane operators. He was the operator of a tower crane working on building a multi-level condominium complex. The victim reported to his supervisor that he would be coming down from the crane's cab. The crane's mast was placed inside the concrete elevator shaft of the building. The mast had a ladder and a series of landings inside the structure allowing the operator access to the crane. He climbed down from the cab and apparently attempted to access the building's 6th floor, where there was a temporary 2x4 railing guarding the shaft. The victim attempted to either jump or step across the gap from the crane's mast to the 6th floor, but instead fell unobserved about 70 feet down the elevator shaft. The broken railing was found at the bottom of the shaft. He was taken to a hospital where he died of his injuries.



Incident scene showing the elevator shaft and crane mast with its ladder and a landing. The victim fell into the shaft outside of the mast structure, apparently while trying to exit the mast and gain access to the 6th floor of the building.

Requirements/Recommendations

(! Indicates items required by code)

- ! The employer needs to provide safe access and egress for crane operators and other persons carrying out inspection and maintenance on tower cranes.
- ! Employers need to provide employees appropriate fall protection equipment when working at any height where a fall hazard exists.
- Erect guardrails and platforms or other isolation means to prevent falls into open areas between a crane tower and building openings.
- Consult the crane manufacturer and/or crane suppliers whenever modifications are needed for access / egress to the crane.
- Use ladders or other systems for access. Do not climb on, or over handrail systems that may be in place.

State Wide Statistics: This was the 73rd out of 80 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2007, and was the 15th out of 16 construction-related fatalities.

**This bulletin was developed at the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries to alert employers and employees of a tragic loss of life of a worker in Washington State. The information in this notice is based on preliminary data ONLY and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident or conclusions regarding the cause of the fatality.*

Developed by the Washington State Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program and the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), WA State Dept. of Labor & Industries. The FACE Program is supported in part by a grant from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). For more information, contact the Safety and Health Assessment and Research for Prevention (SHARP) Program, 1-888-667-4277, <http://www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety/Research/FACE/>.