

### Ironworker Falls 53-feet down Elevator Shaft

At around 4:00 a.m., an experienced ironworker was working as the crew foreman with two others on the fifth floor of a building that was being remodeled. They were working to set a 25-foot-long steel beam above an old elevator shaft where a new floor would be.

The ironworker was sitting on the edge of a metal deck at the opening of the shaft, working to secure the beam. Another worker was nearby on the deck. His co-worker was wearing fall protection, but the ironworker was not. He later told investigators that he had been in a hurry and forgot to put his on.

After the beam was set in place, the end that the ironworker was securing began to slip. As he grabbed the beam to try to keep it from falling, he was pulled toward the edge of the deck.

The ironworker grabbed his co-worker's arm to try to keep himself from falling. This pulled the other worker towards the elevator shaft, but his fall protection stopped him at the edge of the deck.

As the others yelled to the ironworker to let go because it was still secured at one end, the weight of the beam pulled him off the deck.

The ironworker struck a water pipe 10 feet below the deck before falling another 43 feet to the bottom of the elevator shaft and landing in approximately six feet of water. He was able to stand up and walk out of the hole. His co-workers took him to the hospital.

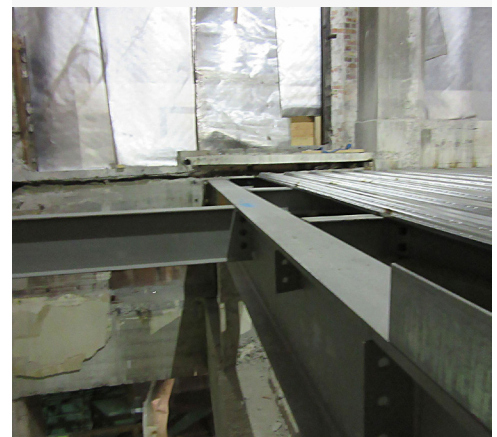
The ironworker suffered a wrist fracture that required multiple surgeries to repair. He was on light duty for approximately 10 months, and has a permanent impairment because of the injury.

### What do you think went wrong?

In the space below, list some of the factors that you think could have contributed to this incident. Then, flip the page over for contributing factors and safety recommendations and requirements.



Area where workers were setting a steel beam over an old elevator shaft. The ironworker was sitting on the edge of the metal deck to secure the beam (arrow).



The deck edge the ironworker was sitting on when he fell.

**Reporting:** Employers are required to contact DOSH within eight hours of a workplace fatality or in-patient hospitalization of any employee. See [WAC 296-27-031](#).

## Contributing Factors

**No fall protection.** The ironworker was not wearing fall protection at the time of the fall. The employer provided fall protection, but the ironworker was in a hurry and forgot to put it on. The employer did not ensure fall protection was being used.

**The ironworker tried to stop the beam from falling.** When the beam started to slip, the ironworker grabbed it causing him to fall from the edge he was sitting on.

## Recommendations

**Perform spot checks.** Employers should perform daily spot checks to ensure workers are wearing fall protection at all times required and are using it correctly.

**Don't rush!** Never skip safety when you're in a hurry. Always stop and think about the hazards that are present when entering or re-entering a work area.

**Speak up.** Stop the operation if you notice other workers not wearing fall protection as required. Speaking up can save a life.

**Consider safer options.** Consider using mechanical means, such as a hoist, to lift/place heavy beams or materials into place.

**Don't try to grab a falling load.** Never attempt to grab or catch a load if it begins to slip or fall. Let the load go and get out of its way. Warn others the load is not secure.

**Plan for Safety.** Conduct a safety meeting before every shift to discuss jobsite and task hazards.

## Requirements

- When the erection or placement of structural members is performed on or from a floor, deck, roof, or similar surface you must comply with [WAC 296-880-200](#): **Fall protection required at four feet or more.** See [WAC 296-880-30005](#)
- The employer must **provide training for each employee exposed to fall hazards.** The training must enable each employee to recognize the hazards of falling and procedures to be followed in order to minimize those hazards. See [WAC 296-880-10015\(1\)](#)
- The employer must **develop and implement a written fall protection work plan** including each area of the work where the employees are assigned and where fall hazards of ten feet or more exist. See [WAC 296-880-10020\(1\)](#)

## Resources

- Chapter 296-880 WAC: Unified Safety Standards for Fall Protection—<https://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=296-880>
- Labor and Industries Falls (from heights) Training and Resources—<https://www.lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-topics/topics/falls-from-heights#training-and-resources>
- National Safety Stand-Down to Prevent Falls in Construction—<https://www.lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-training-materials/workshops-events/standdown>

Safety Training Sign-In (Print Name Legibly)      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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