

Fatality Narrative

Carpenter Falls from Top Plate*

Industry: Residential construction
Occupation: Carpenter
Task: Walking along top plate of house
Type of Incident: Fall

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On December 27, 2005, a carpenter died when he fell from the top plate of a wall on a house under construction. The 53-year-old victim was an experienced carpenter who had been hired by a residential contractor. On the day of the fatal incident, the victim and another worker were working at the job site after the first floor of the house had been framed-out. The victim was walking along the top plate of a wall, when his co-worker observed him stumble, take a few steps, and then fall backwards, landing 8 feet below on a concrete floor. He was taken to a hospital where he was pronounced dead. His death certificate indicated that he died of head injuries sustained as a result of his fall with “acute methamphetamine and ethanol intoxication” as a contributing factor.

Requirements/Recommendations

(! Indicates items required by law)

- ! The employer must provide fall hazard awareness training for all employees exposed to fall hazards.
- When working at heights, employers should evaluate, choose/select the right equipment, such as staging, movable work platforms and ladders that are appropriate and feasible for the work being performed.
- It is recommended that employers consider establishing a drug-free or substance abuse free workplace.
- In establishing a drug-free workplace, the employer should have a clearly written substance abuse program and policy that is enforced.
- The employer should set up training and educate their employees and supervisors about the program.
- The organization’s drug-free workplace policy should send a clear message that the use of alcohol and drugs in the workplace is prohibited and encourages employees to voluntarily seek help with alcohol and drug problems.
- The supervisor is responsible for assuring that employees are competent and capable of performing assigned work.
- Fall protection or guarding should be present when working on tasks that present a significant fall hazard.

State Wide Statistics: This was the 78th out of 80 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2005, and was the 8th out of 9 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. We encourage you to consider the above information as you make safety decisions for or recommendations to your company or constituency. 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.

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