

INCIDENT FACTS

REPORT #:

71-170-2018

REPORT DATE:

May 10, 2018

INCIDENT DATE:

September 4, 2017

VICTIM:

56 years old,
20 years with employer

INDUSTRY:

Berry farming, processing,
and cold storage

OCCUPATION:

Laborer

SCENE:

Cold storage warehouse of
fruit processing facility

EVENT TYPE:

Fall



Scissor lift with its swing gate removed with a chain across the entrance to the lift. The lift's platform has frost on it.

[For a slideshow version, click here.](#)



This narrative is an alert about the tragic loss of life of a worker and is based on preliminary data ONLY and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident or the cause of the fatality. Developed by WA 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 grant# 2U60OH008487). For more information visit www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Research/FACE.

Laborer Falls 20 Feet from Scissor Lift in Fruit Cold Storage Warehouse

SUMMARY

A 56-year-old laborer died after falling 20 feet from a scissor lift in a freezer unit of a fruit processing cold storage warehouse.

The victim had been employed for twenty years as a laborer who did a variety of tasks at his employer's fruit processing plant and warehouse. On the day of the incident, he was assigned to remove frost buildup from the pipes on the ceiling of the freezer unit of the plant's cold storage warehouse. He used a scissor lift to access the ceiling and a squeegee to remove the frost. He had done this task many times.

The lift's entry swing gate was damaged and had been removed for repair. A metal chain was put in its place. The chain was positioned twenty-five inches above the platform, at around the height of the mid-rail of the platform's guardrail.

As the victim scraped the frost, it fell onto the lift's platform, which became slippery. After about 45 minutes, another laborer removing ice from the floor heard a noise and turned around to see the victim on the floor. Emergency responders declared him dead at the scene.

Investigators found that the victim had fallen through the gap where the gate had been removed and landed on the floor 20 feet below. The lift did not have lanyard anchorage points.

REQUIREMENTS

- Employers must furnish and require employees to use any safety devices and safeguards that are needed to control recognized hazards. All agricultural methods, operations, and processes must be designed to promote the safety and health of employees. See [WAC 296-307-045\(2\)](#)
- Employers are responsible for developing and implementing a training program for operators of aerial lifts. See [WAC 296-869-20025](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Always operate equipment according to the requirements of the manufacturer operator's manual. The operator's manual for the scissor lift specified that platform guardrails and the platform entry gate must be in place, in good working order, and the gate closed before operating the lift.
- Employers should incorporate the requirements of the equipment manufacturer operator's manual into worker training.
- Consider using scissor lifts that, in addition to guardrails, are equipped with manufacturer provided anchor points for personal fall restraint systems. Anchor points may also be installed by qualified persons under the direction of the manufacturer or a professional engineer.



Incident scene showing the scissor lift in the freezer unit of the cold storage warehouse.