

Fatality Narrative

Carpenter/Pile Driver Struck by Falling “Strong-back”*

Industry: Industrial building contractors.
Occupation: Carpenter/Pile Driver.
Task: Removing “strong-back” from steel wall.
Type of Incident: Struck by falling beam.

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On December, 12, 2006, a carpenter/pile driver was struck and killed by a falling beam. The 26-year-old victim, a journeyman carpenter/pile driver, had been employed for the previous two months with a construction contractor. The victim was working at a jobsite to remove shoring that had been put into place during the excavation for two new digesters being built at a wastewater treatment plant. The job site supervisor instructed the victim to remove two steel 1,850 lb. horizontal beams, also known as “strongbacks,” from a steel sheet pile wall. The strongbacks to be removed were the bottom row of three rows on the 30’ high by 45’ long steel wall and were about 3 feet from the ground, where the victim was working. The victim was working alone, using an oxy-acetylene torch to cut the gussets on the strongback in order to remove it from the wall. When he cut the last gusset, the strongback fell 3 feet, striking his head and pinning him to the ground. Emergency personnel were called and he was declared dead at the scene.



Photo: The site and remaining beams after the incident.

Requirements/Recommendations

(! Indicates items required by code)

- ! Whether being demolished, moved, or erected, structures must be supported or stabilized where necessary to prevent collapse or shifting.
- Sections cut or unfastened from a structure should not be allowed to drop freely unless there's no danger of hitting anyone below.
- When working on new construction, demolition or dismantling projects, determine how frames, gussets, beams, strongbacks and other components are tied into the structure and connected to each other.
- Never work under an unsupported beam.

State Wide Statistics: This was the 76th out of 81 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2006, and was the 23rd out of 23 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.*

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