

Carpet Installer Dies after Falling 32 Feet at a Commercial Jobsite



Investigation: #09WA05101
Release Date: January 25, 2012
SHARP Report: # 52-23-2012_summary

The WA Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program has published a new Fatality Investigation report. These reports describe work-related fatal incidents and provide specific recommendations that may have prevented the incident from occurring. We hope that they are disseminated and used for formal or informal educational opportunities to help prevent similar incidents.

SUMMARY

On November 12, 2009 a 45-year-old carpet installer was fatally injured when he fell 32 feet from a window striking his head on the concrete sidewalk below. The victim and a coworker were installing carpet in a commercial building that was under construction. The workers were attempting to unload rolls of carpet from a three-sided box, also referred to as a skip box, through a window. The victim was working from inside the skip box which was elevated to an unfinished fourth story window by a variable reach all-terrain telehandler. According to his coworker, the victim had one foot on the window sill and one foot on the end of a carpet roll that was protruding from the skip box. The portion of the carpet roll the victim was standing on was not supported by either the window sill or the skip box. When the victim lifted his foot off the window sill, all his weight shifted onto the roll of carpet. The carpet roll and victim fell 32 feet to the concrete sidewalk. His head struck the concrete sidewalk, and a second roll of carpet fell out of the box and landed on him. EMS was called immediately and arrived on the scene quickly. The victim was transported to the hospital where he later died from injuries sustained from the fall.

Recommendations

To prevent similar incidences the Washington State Fatality and Control Evaluation Team (FACE) recommends that employers, carpet installers and other workers handling materials at elevation should follow these guidelines:

- **Use a safe and approved method to elevate, handle and deliver materials at elevation.**
- **Ensure that guardrails on windows at elevated heights are secured and cannot be removed except by a competent person. Use fall arrest systems when guardrails are removed and place signs or placards showing that workers should not step or lean outside window.**
- **When using powered industrial trucks (PITs) such as telehandlers to elevate and deliver carpet, consider using carpet poles and rug rams.**

Building designers and general contractors should:

- **Integrate fall prevention strategies into the initial design of the building and throughout the construction operational plan.**
- **Designate a specific competent person or persons to be responsible for developing, training, monitoring, and enforcing site-specific safety plans.**

To access the full version of this investigation report along with the detailed recommendations and discussions section, go to www.lni.wa.gov and enter **52-23-2012** into the search box.