

Window Cleaner Falls 50 Feet

INCIDENT FACTS

REPORT #: 71-181-2019s

REPORT DATE: May 1, 2019

INCIDENT DATE: October 17, 2018

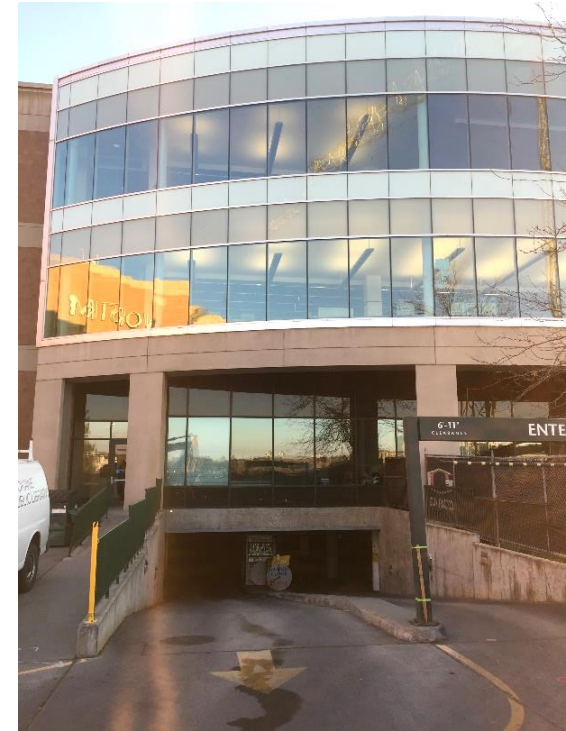
VICTIM: 70 years old

INDUSTRY: Window cleaning

OCCUPATION: Window cleaner

SCENE: Public library building

EVENT TYPE: Fall



A 70-year-old self-employed window cleaner died when he fell 50 feet while cleaning the windows of a public library building. He had been cleaning windows for 50 years.

On the day of the incident, he was working alone to clean the windows of a three-story library. He had cleaned the building's windows twice per year for over four years.

He brought his own suspension system, a portable rolling roof outrigger beam, also known as a “roof rig.”

The roof rig had a metal frame carriage mounted on wheels with a metal beam that extended over the edge of the flat roof. The end of the beam had an anchor point where he attached the descent line for his boatswain’s chair.

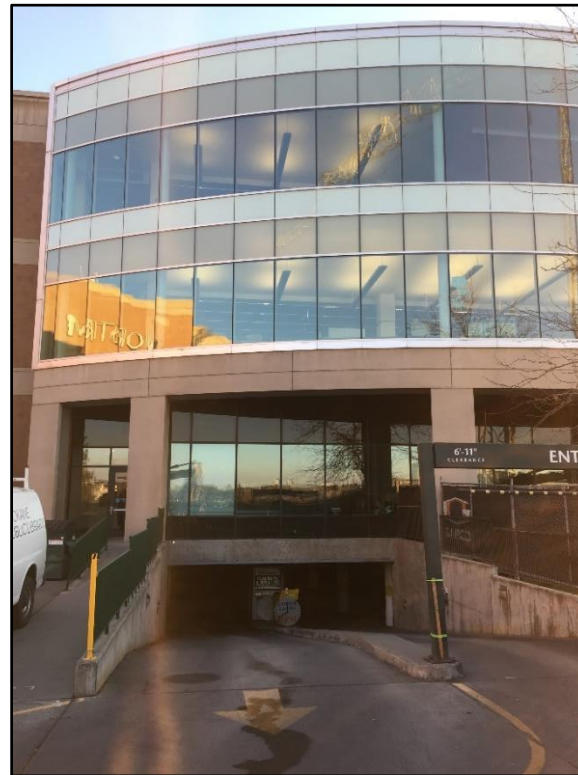
He seated himself in the boatswain's chair and positioned himself over the edge of the roof's parapet. The roof rig was designed to have counterweights on it, but he had not attached them—they were found on the rooftop after the incident.

In addition, he did not tie back the roof rig to any of the certified rooftop anchorage points available nearby.

He was wearing a fall protection harness with a lifeline that he tied off to the back of the roof rig instead of one of the anchor points.

Without the counterweights in place and the roof rig not tied back, the weight of the window cleaner pulled the roof rig off the roof and he and the rig fell 50 feet, landing on asphalt.

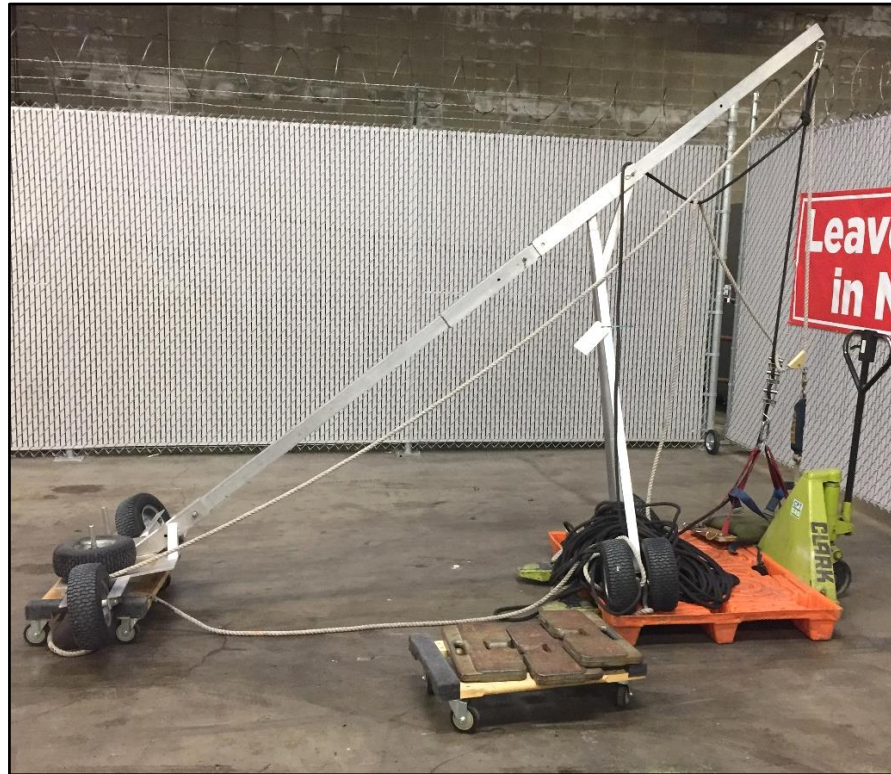
He died at the scene.



The window cleaner fell from the top of the library building as he positioned himself over the edge of the roof's parapet.



Library building rooftop anchor points. The victim did not use any of these.



Incident roof rig. The white line is the lifeline which the window cleaner tied-off to the back of the roller rig as shown in the photo. The black line is the descent line for his boatswain's chair.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



The red circle shows where the window cleaner tied off his lifeline on the rear of the roller rig. Arrows show where the counterweights should have been attached.



Photo credit: MIO Mechanical Corp.

Example of roof rig mobile anchor point for suspended worker with Boatswain's chair (Not the incident rig, but a similar type).

Requirements

Make sure that workers suspended from a boatswain's chair or rope decent system use an independent fall arrest system where the fall arrest anchorage is separate from the suspension system anchorage.

See [WAC 296-878-15025\(3\)](#)

Requirements

Make sure that single-point adjustable Boatswain's chair suspended scaffolds have tiebacks that are equivalent in strength to the scaffold suspension ropes and that the tiebacks are secured to a structurally sound anchorage on the building.

See [WAC 296-874-30008](#)

Requirements

Make sure that rope descent system is designed, used, and maintained according to: (a) ANSI/IWCA I-14.1-2001 Window Cleaning Safety, (b) the manufacturer's instructions.

See [WAC 296-878-20005\(1\)](#)

You must leave counterweights attached to the outrigger beams until after the scaffold has been disassembled.

See [WAC 296-874-30006\(3\)](#)

Resources

International Window Cleaning Association (IWCA), OSHA Alliance Program.

www.osha.gov/dcsp/alliances/iwca/iwca.html

This bulletin was developed to alert employers and employees of a tragic loss of life of a worker in Washington State and 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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