

Framer Falls 20 Feet Through Stairwell Opening

INCIDENT FACTS

REPORT #: 71-198-2020s

REPORT DATE: August 10, 2020

INCIDENT DATE: September 4, 2019

VICTIM: 39 years old

INDUSTRY: Framing contractors

OCCUPATION: Framer

SCENE: Multi-story residential/office building
under construction

EVENT TYPE: Fall



A 39-year-old framer died when he fell 20 feet through a stairwell opening in the second floor deck of a building under construction.

The framer's employer was a framing contractor that was acting as a subcontractor responsible for framing a multi-story residential/office building.

On the day of the incident, the framer was part of a crew of three workers doing various tasks on the building's recently completed second floor deck.

A stairwell opening, fully decked with a plywood cover, was located near where the crew was working. By about 9:30 a.m., a subcontractor's workers had erected guardrails in preparation for removal of the decking. By shortly after 11 a.m., the subcontractor had removed decking from the stairwell opening.

At noon, the framer and his coworkers broke for lunch. They gathered a few yards from the stairwell opening.

No one observed what happened next, but a time-lapse security camera captured the movements of the framer. He walked toward the stairwell, climbed through the guardrail, and stood on the opening's inner concrete ledge. He then fell into the stairwell opening, landing on concrete 20 feet below. First responders took him to a hospital where he later died.

Investigators do not know why the framer entered the area behind the guardrails. He had no work to do in this area.

Investigators speculated that he went there to sit on the ledge and eat his lunch. It is possible that he had been in this area earlier in the day when it was safe to be there and he had not realized that workers had removed the decking cover.

First responders found a bag containing a lunch near his body.



Photo 1. Stairwell opening the framer fell through.



Photo 2. Workers had recently removed a plywood cover from the opening. Investigators speculated that the framer might not have realized that the cover was not there when he climbed through the railings to eat lunch while sitting on the edge of the floor deck.



Photo 3. Security camera image of the building's second floor deck prior to the fatal incident. The stairwell opening with guardrails around it is in the center of the photo.

Recommendations

This tragic fatality could have been prevented if the worker had not gone on the other side of the safety guardrail system without the use of fall protection.

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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