

Laborer Climbing Scaffold Cross Braces Falls 25 Feet

INCIDENT FACTS

REPORT #: 71-226-2022s

REPORT DATE: August 29, 2022

INCIDENT DATE: December 31, 2018

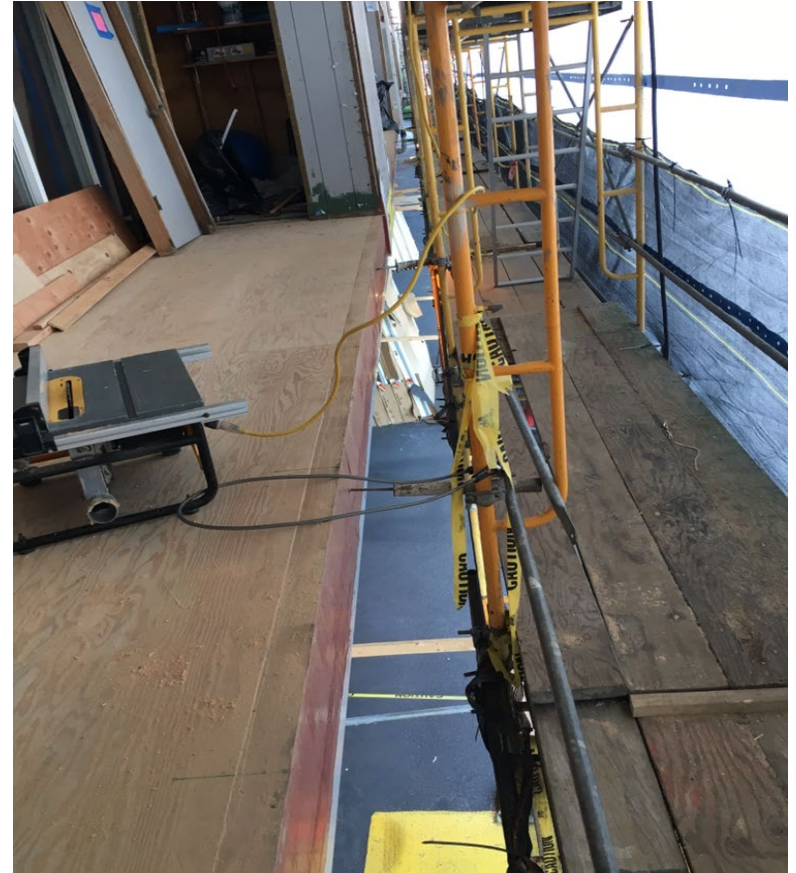
VICTIM: 42 years old

INDUSTRY: Residential remodelers

OCCUPATION: Laborer

SCENE: Worksite of remodeling of a condominium complex

EVENT TYPE: Fall



A 42-year-old construction laborer was fatally injured when he was climbing the cross braces of a scaffold and fell 25 feet.

The laborer had worked for his employer, a construction contractor, for five months. He had worked for two months at the incident site where a condominium complex was being remodeled.

He was new to the trade and had only received informal on-the-job training.

On the day of the incident, the laborer and two other workers were preparing to work on the building's exterior balconies.

A multilevel supported scaffold allowed the workers to access and work on the building exterior. Ladders and safety hatches installed on the inside of the scaffold walking platforms allowed workers to access all levels of the scaffold.

Using the scaffold's interior ladders, they were bringing tools up to balcony decks on the third and fourth floor work areas.

The laborer did not use the scaffold ladders. Instead, he climbed up the outside of the scaffold using its cross braces in the 12 ½-inch gap between the scaffold and the building exterior.

He was not wearing personal fall protection. It was not required because the scaffold was within 14 inches of the work face.

He then retrieved a saw from the second floor level and holding it in one hand began climbing the cross braces to the next level.

As he reached up to hand the saw to a coworker on a balcony, he slipped and fell through the gap, landing 25 feet below on pavement.



Photo 1. The 12 ½-inch gap between the building and the scaffold where the laborer was climbing the scaffold cross braces when he fell.



Photo 2. View from below the 12 ½-inch gap between the building and the scaffold (indicated by arrow) where the laborer fell through.



Photo 3. View from ground level showing cross braces and position in relation to the building.



Photo 4. Location where the laborer landed after falling 25 feet from the scaffold cross braces.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



Photo 5. Scaffold side bracket with 19-inch wide scaffold platform (walk board). Photo courtesy of Metaltech.

Requirements

Employers must:

- Make sure cross braces are not used as a means of access.
See [WAC 296-874-20020\(2\)](#)
- Enforce the fall protection requirements for scaffolds.
See [WAC 296-880-30030](#)
- Develop a formal accident-prevention program tailored to the needs of the particular plant or operation and to the type of hazard involved. See [WAC 296-155-110\(2\)](#)
- Train employees who work on a scaffold.
See [WAC 296-874-20072](#)

Recommendations

- Train workers to never climb on or use scaffold cross braces as a means of access.
- Assess fall hazards and the need for personal fall protection, even when it is not required.
- Add scaffold side brackets and planks just below each level of decks to prevent workers from accessing or falling through the gap between building and scaffold.
- Provide one dedicated access point to each deck from the scaffold.

Resources

Preventing Falls From Scaffolding Toolbox Talk – [English](#) and [Spanish](#)

This narrative was developed to alert employers and workers of a tragic incident 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.

Developed by Washington State Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program and the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), Washington 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-health/safety-research/ongoing-projects/work-related-fatalities-face.