

## Painter/Rigger Falls 200 Feet from Bridge into River

**Industry:** Painting contractors

**Task:** Rigging a safety cable

**Occupation:** Journeyman  
painter/rigger

**Type of Incident:** Fall





# ***FATALITY NARRATIVE***

On October 7, 2012, a 40-year-old journeyman painter/rigger died when he fell from a bridge. The incident happened at a bridge over a large river where the steel superstructure was being cleaned and painted.

The employer had been working on the bridge for over two years. The victim had 21 years of experience as a rigger and painter, 15 years of that with the employer, and he had been working on this project for over a year.

On the day of the incident the victim was part of a crew rigging cables and tarps to create debris containment areas. Crews would later work in those areas using high-pressure air hoses to blast away rust and old paint from the bridge's steel superstructure. The victim was working from a temporary deck located alongside the bridge and about six feet below the main bridge deck. He was rigging a safety cable along the outside of the deck to serve as a horizontal lifeline to which workers could tie off. There was a safety cable at about head height; the victim was rigging another cable beneath it at mid-body level. Another rigger was feeding out cable to the victim as he strung it out by walking along the deck. When the victim got to the end of the cable he climbed up on a partially collapsed containment area tarp positioned over the deck to reach an anchor in order to secure the cable. As he did so, he lost his balance and fell off the side of the deck. He landed in the river 200 feet below.

His body was found four weeks later. An examination of the victim's body by investigators revealed that he was wearing a personal fall arrest system consisting of a full body harness with two lanyards and the appropriate connectors. His system was found to be in working condition, which indicates that he was not tied off when he fell.

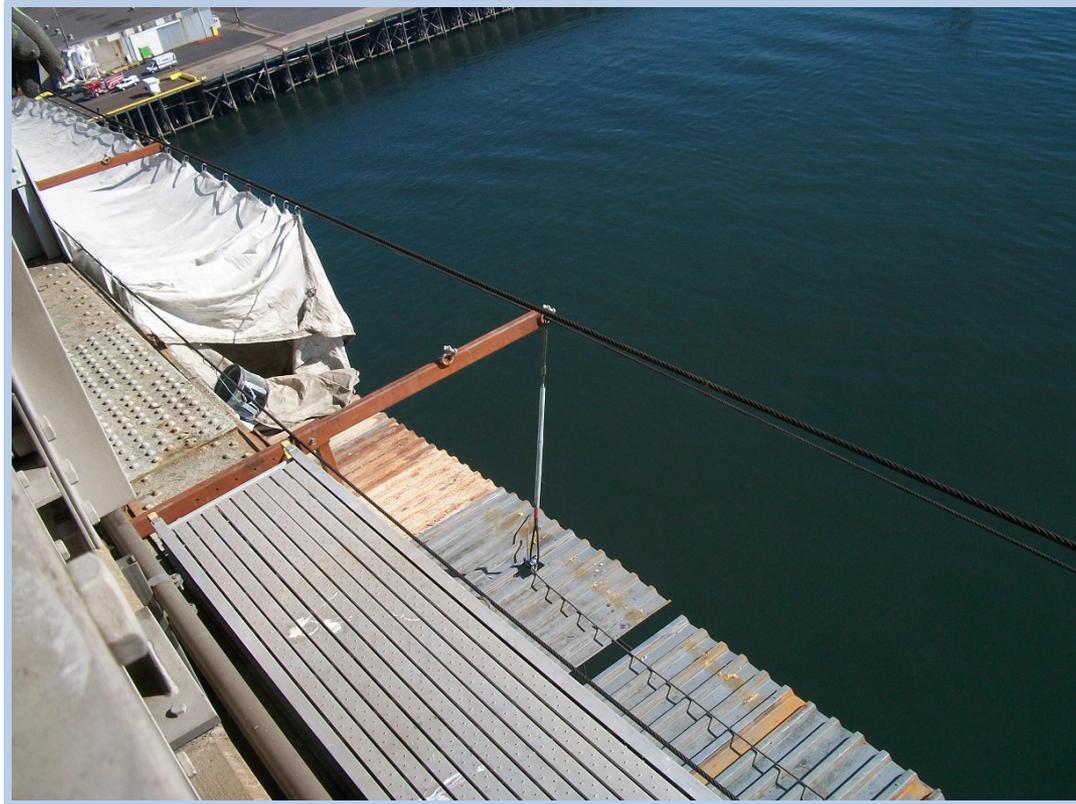
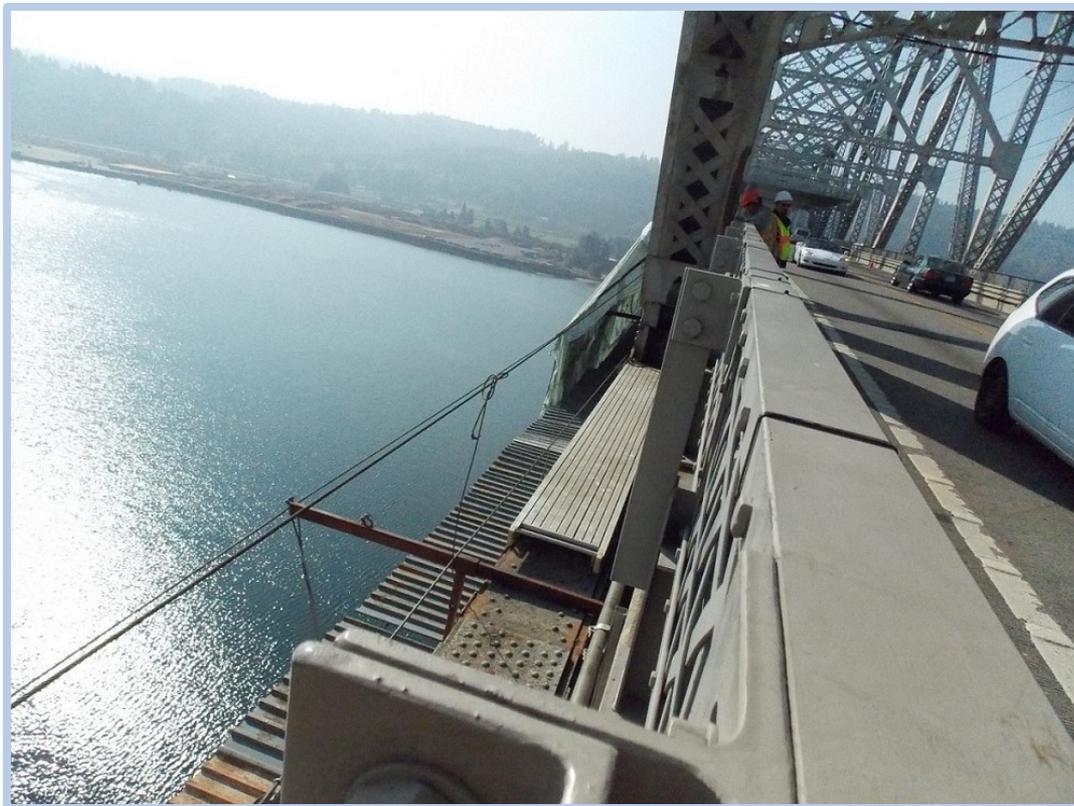


Photo taken from bridge deck looking down to the temporary deck where the victim was rigging a safety cable. He climbed onto the tarp to reach an anchor in order to secure the cable. He fell from the tarp and over the side of the deck, landing in the river 200 feet below. He was not tied off. The cable he was attempting to rig can be seen running along the deck surface and over the edge.



Location where the victim fell from a tarp covering a temporary deck.



Temporary deck below main bridge deck. The victim had been stringing a safety cable along the temporary deck. The location from which he fell is just beyond the lower left of the photo.



# *FATALITY NARRATIVE*

## **Requirements**

- **Fall Protection Systems.** Ensure that the appropriate fall protection system is provided, installed, and implemented according to the requirements in Part C-1, Fall Protection Requirements for Construction when employees are exposed to fall hazards of four feet or more to the ground or lower level when on a walking/working surface. See WAC 296-155-24609(1).
- **Fall Protection Work Plan.** Develop and implement a written fall protection work plan for each area of the work place where the employees are assigned and where fall hazards of ten feet or more exist. See WAC 296-155-24611(2).
- **Training.** Train and instruct employees in the requirements of the fall protection work plan. See WAC 296-155-24611(2)(b).



# ***FATALITY NARRATIVE***

## **Recommendations**

Ensure that workers maintain 100% tie off when exposed to fall hazards.

- *His system was found to be in working condition, which indicates that he was not tied off when he fell.*



# FATALITY NARRATIVE

**Statewide Statistics:** This was number 51 of 64 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2012, and was number 7 of 8 construction-related fatalities.

*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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