

Falling 700-lb Joist Breaks Laborer's Leg

Industry: Construction

Release Date: July 25, 2012

Task: Connecting Choker to Joist

Occupation: Laborer

A 20-year-old laborer broke his left leg when a 700-lb steel joist fell on him. The victim, who was not a trained rigger at the time, was at a commercial jobsite erecting a steel roof. He was going to connect a choker to a joist. The joist was standing on one of the chords. The plan was to move the joist with a forklift. As the victim turned to look at the forklift operator, the joist fell. The joist was approximately 3.5 feet tall, 25 feet long and 6 inches wide and had been standing in position approximately 10 seconds before falling.

At the time of the incident, the employee had been working for the company for 4.5 months. He had previously completed this task on other joists. The employee was uncertain as to what caused the joist to fall. He thought that it may not have been on level ground, or that the vibrations from the forklift may have caused it to fall over. According to the employee, nothing hit the joist before it fell.

After the injury, the victim needed crutches and had to depend on family and friends to help him get around. Due to the injury, the victim is unable to do the activities he enjoys, such as playing sports and hiking.



Employer Requirements

- Employers must ensure that structural steel, poles, pipe, bar stock, and other cylindrical materials, unless racked, shall be stacked and blocked so as to prevent spreading or tilting. See WAC 296-155-325(2)(i).
- Employers must use qualified riggers during hoisting activities for assembly and disassembly work. See WAC 296-155-55600.
- Employers must ensure that all materials are stored so they do not create a hazard. See WAC 296-800-22035.

Recommendations

- Ensure that you have been trained and are aware of hazards present in your working environment. Do not work in an environment in which you are not trained in how to recognize and minimize hazards.
- Only workers who have been trained in rigging by a certified trainer should complete rigging tasks.
- Ensure that all equipment and materials are stable and secure before attempting to rig or move them.

Resources

- Request a free report on top 10 mistakes when rigging heavy loads at: <http://consolidatedrigging.com/free-report/>
- Download a free article on Safe Handling and Erection of Steel Joists and Joist Girders at: Handling.SteelJoist.org
- A free OSHA Materials Handling and Storing Publication is available at: OSHA.MaterialsHandlingandStorage.gov
- Request a free L&I workplace safety and health consultation at: www.SafetyConsult.Lni.wa.gov

Need More information?

Please contact Eric Jalonen, Research Investigator at 360-902-6751 or email Eric.Jalonen@Lni.wa.gov