

Worker Killed When Struck by Suspended Crane Load



What happened?

Workers were unloading large metal supports, called gantry legs, from a lowboy trailer onto wooden dunnage on the ground when the “down signal” had been given to the crane operator. The load, which was about shoulder high, dropped as the operator touched the lever to lower the load. The victim was guiding the load onto the dunnage and was within arm’s reach of the gantry leg when the slings holding the load failed. The load dropped and swiveled onto another gantry leg, which then struck the victim. A professional engineer inspected the slings and determined that heat damage caused the failure.

What can you do to prevent this from happening at your workplace?

- Follow the sling manufacturer’s directions for use of their product.
- Inspect slings for damage prior to each use. Ensure your web slings are clean and dry. Grease, oil, mud, ice, and water decrease the coefficient of friction between the slings and load being lifted. Even a short slide by the sling can create enough heat to cause melting and sling failure.
- A different style of sling protection may have prevented friction heat-related failure.
- Watch worker proximity to the lift; there is a natural pendulum effect of a load suspended by cable over the center of gravity.
- When lifting materials with sharp edges, carefully choose the type of softener you will use to protect your web slings. Inspect your slings and softeners before and after each use to ensure they are protecting rigging from damage and failure.
- Spreader bars should be used to support long, hard to handle loads during lifting. These bars eliminate load tipping, sliding, or bending and also decrease the possibility of very low sling angles. Use tag lines to guide and control the load in tight quarters.

This bulletin was developed by L&I’s Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) to alert employers, labor groups, and employees of a tragic loss of life. The information in this bulletin is based on preliminary data and does NOT represent final determinations of the incident or conclusions regarding the cause of the fatality

Need more information?

[Get Started with Safety & Health](#) for information on safety and health, rules and policies, sample programs, and general assistance.

Interested in a free safety consultation at your workplace?

The Department of Labor & Industries provides consultations, training, and technical assistance at no cost to employers. Call today to schedule a free confidential consultation or go to [Request Consultation](#) for more information. You may also call 1-800-423-7233 or visit a local L&I office and ask for the Consultation Manager.

How does an employee file a complaint?

Employees or employee representatives may file formal complaints with DOSH when they believe a safety or health hazard exists in their workplace. [Complaint forms](#) are available from your local L&I office in both English and Spanish, or on the Web.

Contact us. We're here to help.