

INCIDENT FACTS

REPORT #:

71-215-2022

REPORT DATE:

February 7, 2022

INCIDENT DATE:

December 12, 2020

WORKER:

24 years old

INDUSTRY:

Power and Communication
Line and Related Structures
Construction

OCCUPATION:

Tower climber

SCENE:

Communication tower

EVENT TYPE:

Fall



Gin pole jump plate used in the operation.

[For a slideshow version, click here.](#)



This narrative was developed to alert employers and workers of a tragic incident and is based on preliminary data ONLY and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident or the cause of the injury. Developed by WA State Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program and the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), WA 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# 5U600H008487). For more information visit www.lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-research/ongoing-projects/work-related-fatalities-face.

Communication Tower Worker Falls 260 Feet

SUMMARY

A 24-year-old tower climber fell 260 feet from a communication tower under construction.

The climber was one of three workers on the tower who all worked for the same tower erection service. He was a certified instructor and the designated safety person and fall protection trainer for the company. He was wearing a full-body harness equipped with a positioning lanyard and a Y-lanyard.

The crew was in the process of adding the final 20-foot section to the self-supporting tower. They were using a triangular lattice gin pole to “stack” the tower sections. They had just jumped, or raised, the gin pole into position in order to lift the final section. They used a jump plate to help lift and position the gin pole. The plate was a 6-foot long square steel tube with a steel loop welded in the center.

The climber was in the process of unbolting the plate so they could lower it to the ground. He removed the last bolt that secured the plate to the tower and then leaned back. When he did, he fell 260 feet to the ground. The climber did not connect either pelican hook of his fall arrest Y-lanyard to an anchor point on the tower. The plate was still attached to the winch line when it swung down and struck his coworker in the chest.

An investigation found that:

- The employer had developed safe rigging and lifting plans for the job and had provided all required personal protective equipment (PPE) and training to the workers.
- The climber’s harness, D-rings, lanyards, and pelican hooks were not defective and in safe working condition.
- The crew and employer were unable to identify circumstances that did not allow him to tie-off.

REQUIREMENTS

This employer was not cited for violating any safety standards. Employers doing similar work should review:

- [Safety Standards - WAC 296-32 Telecommunication - Pocket Version](#)
- Accident prevention program and safety meetings. See [WAC 296-32-22512](#)
- Fall protection. See [WAC 296-32-22555](#) and [WAC 296-32-24012](#)
- Gin Pole Installation. See [WAC 296-32-24022](#)
- Criteria for Safety Practices with the Construction, Demolition, Modification and Maintenance of Communication Structures. See industry consensus standard [ANSI/ASSP 10.48](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

FACE investigators concluded that, to help prevent similar occurrences:

- Establish and maintain a communication system among all workers on site and ensure workers on the tower communicate and confirm step-by-step procedures anytime they change positions or perform tasks that require them to detach and reattach their fall arrest systems.
- Frequently reinforce training on proper use of fall protection equipment with emphasis on always maintaining one point of attachment and reattaching before detaching so that workers maintain 100% tie-off while on the tower.



Tower from which the climber fell with the smaller triangular gin pole suspended in the front.