

Inexperienced Framers Falls 22 Feet from Upper Floor

INCIDENT FACTS

REPORT #: 71-253-2024s

REPORT DATE: May 1, 2024

INCIDENT DATE: March 23, 2023

WORKER: 30 years old

INDUSTRY: Framing Contractors

OCCUPATION: Construction Framers

SCENE: Residential construction site

EVENT TYPE: Fall from height



FATALITY NARRATIVE



A 30-year-old framer fell 22 feet from an unfinished upper floor of a new single-family house under construction. He worked for his employer, a residential framing contractor, for only three days. He was inexperienced and learning on-the-job.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



The framer was working with a supervisor on the unfinished, open-sided floor. The floor was still being framed, and the supervisor removed fall prevention guardrails in an area where a wall assembly was going to be installed.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



The supervisor instructed the framer to cut out a window opening in a piece of wood sheathing being prepared for the wall assembly. After making the opening, the framer went to drop the cuttings down to a scrap pile on the ground. He walked on the wall assembly, which was laying on the floor, and then onto a small piece of attached sheathing that extended past the edge of the floor.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



The sheathing was not properly nailed down and gave way under his weight, causing him to fall 22 feet to the ground. The supervisor witnessed the fall, ran downstairs, and called 911. The emergency dispatcher guided him in giving first aid. When first responders arrived, they could not save the framer, who died of severe head injuries

Following the incident, investigators found:

- The employer had no fall protection system and work plan and did not enforce any requirements. The employer had been previously cited for fall protection rule violations.
- The framer was wearing a body harness but had no other personal fall arrest system (PFAS) components.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



- Supervisors routinely used chalk lines in place of PFAS when guardrails were removed, but no lines were observed at the incident site. The owners were aware of but never corrected the unsafe practice.
- Workers were rushing to raise the walls so trusses could be placed on top of them upon delivery and to avoid the delay of having the trusses delivered on the floor and lifted by a crane later.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



Photo 1. Open-sided upper floor where guardrails were removed.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



Photo 2. Unprotected floor where the framer fell.



Photo 3. Aerial view of upper floor with arrow showing wall sheathing extending over unprotected edge.

The X marks the ground-level area where the framer landed after falling.

Requirements

Employers must:

- Employers with employees exposed to fall hazards must have and enforce policies in their accident prevention program (APP) that meet the Unified Safety Standards for Fall Protection. See [WAC 296-880](#)
- The employer must develop and implement a written fall protection work plan including each area of the work place where the employees are assigned and where fall hazards of ten feet or more exist. See [WAC 296-880-10020](#)

Requirements

- Ensure a competent person trains each affected employee to know at least the following::
 - (a) The nature of fall hazards in the work area; (b) When fall protection is required; (c) What fall protection is required; (d) The correct procedures for erecting, maintaining, assembling, disassembling, and inspecting the fall protection systems to be used; (e) The use and operation of fall protection systems used; (f) Limitations of fall protection systems used; (g) Proper care, maintenance, useful life, removal from service; and (h) The requirements of this chapter. See [WAC 286-880-10015\(2\)](#)

Recommendations

FACE investigators concluded that to help prevent similar occurrences employers should:

- Develop APP policies to use PFAS when fall prevention guardrails are not in place on open-sided floors.
- Discuss fall protection policies at crew meetings, monthly safety meetings, and annual stand-downs.
- Conduct recurring hands-on fall protection training and ensure workers show proficiency in practice.
- Require all levels of management to spot check workers and enforce fall protection policies and practices.
- Use a project timeline to communicate task schedules with workers and suppliers to avoid rushing.

Resources

[Fall Protection Fundamentals online training course](#)

[Spanish version](#)

Oregon OSHA Public Education

FATALITY NARRATIVE



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 injury.

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