

Case 148. 46-year-old Hispanic laborer died after falling approximately 30 feet from a tree.

A 46-year-old male Hispanic laborer died after falling approximately 30 feet from a tree. He was working in a park, hanging holiday lights in a tree. The decedent was instructed to run extension cords and lights up tree trunks to a distance reachable by a 12-foot stepladder. His coworkers were hanging lights at higher elevations from a bucket truck. The decedent was not wearing a safety harness when he climbed the tree. He had completed hanging lights on one limb and climbed another limb to continue hanging the lights. His coworkers heard a crash and went to investigate. They found the decedent on the ground and a ball of lights in a branch approximately 30 feet high in the tree. They called 911 and the decedent was taken to a local hospital. He died approximately three weeks later of complications from the injuries sustained at the time of the incident. The decedent had recently received training on proper ladder use. Employee interview statements taken by MIOSHA indicated that they had been instructed not to climb structures or trees. The decedent had performed this task in previous years and no one had ever known or seen him climb trees. The company for whom the decedent worked ensured that Spanish-speaking employees received training and memos in Spanish.

MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division did not issue any citations to the employer at the conclusion of the investigation.