

Case 321. 42-year-old temporary worker assigned crane operator duties died when steel beams fell from a stack and crushed his pelvis.

A 42-year-old male temporary worker assigned crane operator duties died when steel beams fell from a stack and crushed his pelvis. He had been “in training” for two to three weeks working under the direction of an experienced employee. The decedent was in the process of “picking an order” when the incident occurred. The decedent did not have a crane operator permit. The incident area was a bay with several aisles separated by stacks of steel I-beams that measured 35 feet long by 8 inches wide by 7 inches tall. Each beam weighed approximately 980 pounds. The decedent was working alone. The decedent was wearing a radio pendant which operated one of the two cranes in the area. The sequence of events is unknown. Based on employee statements, it appeared the decedent walked on the stack of beams instead of the floor. An employee walking by the bay heard a noise, and looked over to the location of the sound. He saw the decedent grabbing at a beam, perhaps to regain his balance. It appeared that this action caused four beams to fall. The steel I-beams landed on his back and legs, pinning him against the stack. The sling chains for the crane which had been operated by the decedent’s remote pendant were not moving, which indicated that a sling or rigging failure did not cause the beams to fall onto him. The passerby activated the facility’s emergency procedure. Because the crane used by the decedent was located above him and the remote pendant was unable to be accessed due to the decedent’s position against the I-beam stack, a second crane in the area was used to push the crane away and lift the I-beams from the decedent. Emergency response transported the decedent to a local hospital where he was declared dead.

MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division issued the following Serious and Other than Serious citations at the conclusion of its investigation.

SERIOUS: GENERAL PROVISIONS, PART 1, Rule 15(1):

Materials, including scrap and debris, were piled, stacked, or placed in a container in a manner that created a hazard to an employee:

(Improper stacking, steel I-beams 35-feet long at 28 pounds per foot, were stacked in a manner that allowed four (4) beams to fall on an employee walking along the stack, steel beam storage – Heavy Bay, Warehouse)

OTHER THAN SERIOUS: OVERHEAD AND GANTRY CRANES, PART 18, RULE 1872(1)(a):

Frequent and/or periodic inspections were not made as designated in table 3 and Appendix B of Part 18:

(Last documented crane inspection conducted in May 2010, six (6) cranes – Throughout Warehouse)