

Case 350. 38-year-old tire service technician died due to asphyxiation when the semi-truck cab he was working under came down on his chest.

A 38-year-old male tire service technician died due to asphyxiation when the semi-truck cab he was working under came down on his chest. The decedent was “on call” and was performing an after-hours service call to repair a flat, passenger-side front steering tire of a semi –truck. The incident occurred in a dark parking lot. The decedent attempted to replace the tire with the rim still mounted on the vehicle instead of removing the tire and placing the tire in the safety cage located on the service truck. The decedent used a 20-ton hydraulic bottle jack placed behind the tire on the shackle of the leaf spring to raise the semi cab. He did not use the two jack stands on the service truck as secondary support. With the tire/tire rim still mounted to the truck, the decedent removed the flat tire. When he placed the new tire on the rim, it would not inflate via the airline he attached from the service truck compressor. With the airline still attached, it is postulated that instead of using the two-foot long tool to turn the T-release valve, the decedent went under the truck and used pliers to turn the T-release valve counterclockwise to lower the jack just enough to seat the tire. Unexpectedly, the jack pressure released and with no air in the tire, the truck cab landed on his chest.

MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division issued the following alleged Serious citations to the employer at the conclusion of its investigation:

SERIOUS: HAND AND PORTABLE POWERED TOOLS, PART 38

- **RULE 3838(1):** The rated capacity was not permanently marked on the jack:
No capacity rating identified on Service Jack used for Emergency Road Service on Truck #16.
- **RULE 3839(1):** A jack shall be inspected for leaks, mechanical defects, and lubrication according to the following requirements:
 - a. Not less than semi-annually
 - b. Before and after a special use or abnormal shock
 - c. After repairs or servicing
- **RULE 3839(2):** A defective jack shall be tagged and removed from service
Service Jack used for Emergency Road Service on Truck #16 was leaking fluid.

SERIOUS: AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE OPERATIONS, PART 72, RULE 7234(2): An employee was not prohibited from placing his or her body under a vehicle supported only by a jack, overhead hoist, or chain fall:

Employee placed body under hydraulically jacked vehicle when changing the front tire, with the rim still mounted on the vehicle, with the benefit of a secondary means of support.