

Case 389. 41-year-old male assembly line team leader died from head injuries sustained when his head struck a cabinet while working near a “chain on edge” vehicle conveyor assembly line.

A 41-year-old male assembly line team leader died from head injuries sustained when his head struck a cabinet while working near a “chain on edge” vehicle conveyor assembly line. At the time of the incident, his job task was to make repairs to the lift gate of a vehicle. The assembly line was elevated 15-20 feet in the air and the work area was also elevated. There were three different elevated work areas; the upper area was accessed by two stairs, the middle area was the designated crossover area between sides of the assembly line, and the third area (where the decedent was working on the rear fascia/lift gate) was approximately 12-18 inches lower than the designated crossover area. Located on the marked (yellow-striped) area indicating the pedestrian crossover was a 35-inch tall cabinet. The sequence of events which caused the injury leading to his death was unknown. The information supplied to the medical examiner at time of autopsy was “Mr. was working on an assembly line (moving conveyor) and while at said line trying to make repairs he was thrown into a tool box where he sustained initial trauma and then fell to the ground.” The medical examiner report stated “The location, physical findings and extent of bleeding ... indicate that the initial trauma created a chain of events that ultimately led to his demise.” One of the many possible incident scenarios was that he was using the vehicle for support as he was stepping up onto the middle section when the conveyor/car moved forward, causing him to be propelled forward, hitting his head on the cabinet. After the injury, the decedent was found lying on pedestrian crossover area with his head toward the cabinet and his feet near the stairs to the upper level. The lift gate on one vehicle was raised. A nearby coworker stopped the assembly line and summoned help. CPR was initiated by plant personnel while waiting for emergency responders. The decedent was declared dead at the hospital.

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

SERIOUS: GI Part 14, Conveyors, 408.11412(4)

A walkway or catwalk along a conveyor shall be maintained clear of spills or other obstructions which may be a slipping or tripping hazard.

There was a blue cabinet/locker kept in the walkway of the catwalk of the ... line (*name of assembly area removed by MIFACE*).