Aerial Platform Safety Fatality File

A 49 year-old male millwright employed at a magnetic powder manufacturing company sustained fatal injuries when an aerial work platform (an extensible articulating boom lift) he was operating tipped over. On the day of the incident, the victim and a co-worker operated the lift that was leased from a local leasing company to perform maintenance tasks. The aerial lift was equipped with a stabilizing device: an extendable axle to enhance the vehicle's stability. The manufacturer stated in the Operators and Safety Manual that all operators must properly position the extendable axle and lock it into position before raising the platform or extending the boom. There were two safety features on the lift that were designed to ensure the use of the stabilizing device: an axle set indicator light and an interlock. A post incident test showed that while the indicator light worked, the interlock was inoperable. The plant maintenance crew did not receive the Operators and Safety Manual from the leasing company nor did they receive any training on how to operate the lift. According to the witnesses, the extendable axle was never set out during the entire day of the incident. At approximately 3:30PM, the victim was performing a visual inspection of the exterior of a bucket elevator that was about 70 feet high. He wore a harness with a lanyard that was attached and secured to the platform attachment point, a hard hat, safety glasses and steel-toed boots. Just prior to the incident, the co-worker saw the victim in the platform directly underneath the elevator's catwalk that was about 54 feet high. A few minutes later, the co-worker and a swing shift millwright heard and saw the lift fall. The boom was extended to 38 feet when the lift tipped.

The platform hit a pickup truck parked nearby causing the victim, who was still attached to the platform by the lanyard, to be bounced out of the platform. The co-worker and the swing shift millwright ran to the victim and found him unconscious and not breathing. The fire department and the rescue crew responded

within three minutes after receiving a 911 call from the plant. The victim was transported to a local hospital where he was pronounced dead.

New York State Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (NY FACE) investigators concluded that to help prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future, employers should:

- Ensure that the employees receive proper training before allowing them to operate aerial lifts;
- Require that the operators inspect the aerial lift and test critical safety features before each use and perform safety checkups each time the platform is repositioned during operation;