Carpet Layer Safety Fatality File

Carpet Installer Dies after Falling 32 Feet at a Commercial Jobsite

On November 12, 2009 a 45-year-old carpet installer was fatally injured when he fell 32 feet from a window striking his head on the concrete sidewalk below. The victim and a coworker were installing carpet in a commercial building that was under construction.

The workers were attempting to unload rolls of carpet from a three-sided box, also referred to as a skip box, through a window. The victim was working from inside the skip box which was elevated to an unfinished fourth story window by a variable reach all terrain telehandler. According to his coworker, the victim had one foot on the windowsill and one foot on the end of a carpet roll that was protruding from the skip box. The portion of the carpet roll the victim was standing on was not supported by either the windowsill or the skip box. When the victim lifted his foot off the windowsill, all his weight shifted onto the roll of carpet. The carpet roll and victim fell 32 feet to the concrete sidewalk. His head struck the concrete sidewalk, and a second roll of carpet fell out of the box and landed on him. EMS was called immediately and arrived on the scene quickly. The victim was transported to the hospital where he later died from injuries sustained from the fall.

CAUSE OF DEATH

The medical examiner listed the cause of death as subarachnoid hemorrhage (brain bleed), right lung laceration, multiple rib, pelvic and spinal fractures, contusion of heart and blunt force injury of head and torso.

To prevent similar incidences the Washington State Fatality and Control Evaluation Team (FACE) recommends that employers, carpet installers and other workers handling materials at elevation should follow these guidelines:

- Use a safe and approved method to elevate, handle and deliver materials at elevation.
- Ensure that guardrails on windows at elevated heights are secured and cannot be removed except by a competent person. Use fall arrest systems when guardrails are removed and place signs or placards showing that workers should not step or lean outside window.
- When using powered industrial trucks (PITs) such as telehandlers to elevate and deliver carpet, consider using carpet poles and rug rams.