Concrete Block Hits Highway Builder

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A 30-foot (10-meter) high concrete retaining wall made of interlocking concrete blocks was already in place. Then workers began to install concrete caps on top of the wall. A seven-person crew went to work on the job, which was part of a highway bridge project.

Suddenly a one-ton piece of pre-cast concrete, one of the cap pieces, broke loose as it was being hoisted to the top of the wall. A 51-year-old worker and his job superintendent were in a lift, still on the ground, waiting to be raised to grout and finish installing the cap after it was put in place. But the cap fell from the hoist, struck the worker on his hardhat and body and killed him.

An investigation found that one of the bolts that held the rigging around the concrete cap had pulled out. The weight on the remaining bolt caused it to fail also. The worker and his superintendent were too close to the heavy piece of concrete, which should not have been lifted over them or anyone else. The rigging for the load should have been correctly chosen and tested ahead of time. Better assessment of the lifting hazards might have saved this worker's life.

Source: National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program: Nebraska, Case Report O5NE028