Corroded Catwalk Collapses

A fall from a catwalk above a bulk conveyor system killed a maritime facility worker.

The conveyor was used to transfer fertilizer from barges to a warehouse. At the time of the incident, the victim had been standing on the catwalk inside the warehouse. From a height of 35 feet (11 meters) above the floor, he was adjusting the tripper control that causes the product to be dumped from the conveyor to a hopper.

A co-worker who also had been up on the catwalk went below to operate power to the conveyor belt as the first worker tried to jog the tripper into the correct position for operation.

The catwalk collapsed and the worker fell to the concrete floor. The catwalk had been severely corroded. Before the collapse, it had been showing signs of breaking and bending at the spot that eventually broke. Other sections of the catwalk had already fallen and others were ready to collapse.

This fatality could have been prevented by regularly inspecting the catwalk to be sure it remained structurally sound. When it was found to be defective, it should have been removed from service. Access should have been prevented until repairs could be completed.

Fertilizer commonly causes corrosion on surrounding structures, so this catwalk should have been made of corrosion-resistant material such as concrete and fiberglass.