Drywall Installation Fatality File

Plasterer/Drywall Installer Dies From 30-Foot Fall Through Skylight, Michigan

In Spring 2017, a 20-year-old male plasterer/drywall installer died from an approximate 30-foot fall through a 24-inch by 48-inch plastic bubble-covered skylight to a concrete floor. The decedent was working on the west side of a flat building roof next to the skylight of a water treatment plant. His work area was cluttered with demolition debris, including lumber, metal pipes, a five-gallon bucket and several pieces of foam installation material. The decedent's work task was to apply adhesive to the back of a 2½- inch thick, 2-foot by 4-foot expanded foam board to be used for a penthouse exterior wall plastering operation. After troweling on the adhesive to the foam board, he walked with the foam board to the west side of the building and gave it to the firm owner, who was working in a boom lift for installation on the penthouse wall. The decedent walked back to the prep area to prepare another piece of foam. The firm owner heard a "crushing" sound, and when he looked over towards the sound, saw the decedent sitting on the plastic skylight cover. The skylight covers then "gave out". The decedent attempted to grab the sides of the skylight to keep from falling through but was unsuccessful. He fell to the concrete floor 30-feet 8-inches below.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- No guarding for skylight
- Fall protection not utilized near unguarded skylight
- Lack of employer and employee experience working with, identifying, and training for skylight hazards
- Written fall protection program did not address skylights

hazards
- General contractor, city, engineering firm and other firms working on roof did not provide safety training for skylights

RECOMMENDATIONS

- MIFACE investigators concluded that, to help prevent similar occurrences, employers should:
- Develop, implement, and enforce a comprehensive, written health and safety program that includes safety requirements when working near/around roof openings and skylights.
- Assure that all workers required to work near roof openings or skylights are adequately trained to recognize the serious hazard of falls through roof openings, and the danger of sitting or stepping on skylights.
- On multi-employer sites, utilize contract language that clearly defines the safety responsibilities of each contractor prior to the initiation of work.
- Implement an employee assistance program (EAP).