Garage Door Installers Fatality File

Maintenance Mechanic Killed when Improperly Installed Overhead Garage Door Toppled Scissors Lift

On December 13, 2004, a 62-year-old maintenance mechanic employed by a facility maintenance firm, was fatally injured while servicing an overhead garage door for a shipping company. The facility maintenance firm had been contracted by the shipping company to repair the garage door.

At the time of the incident, the victim and a co-worker were testing the door when the door became jammed with the bottom of the door three feet above the ground. The victim was working on the platform of a scissors lift that was extended approximately 15 feet above the ground and parked parallel to the door. No additional fall protection was used nor is it required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) when operating a scissors lift with a standard guardrail system. The victim first tried to manually disconnect the garage door arm assembly from the track with the emergency release handle by pulling the handle and cord assembly, but it would not release. He then asked the co-worker for a screwdriver. The co-worker and a shipping company mechanic were both in the area on the ground. The mechanic provided a screwdriver to the victim.

The victim used the screwdriver to pry the emergency disconnect away from the chain drive assembly. According to the co-worker, both he and the victim anticipated that the door would go down upon being manually released due to its weight. Instead the door abruptly sprang upwards to the fully open position, striking the guardrail of the scissors lift and causing the lift to topple to the concrete floor. The co-worker and shipping company mechanic

ran to the victim who had fallen out of the scissors lift and was lying on the concrete unresponsive. The mechanic called 911. The EMS squad and police arrived within minutes. The victim was quickly transported to a hospital where he was pronounced dead.