Ironworker Falls

Could This Have Been You?

On average, 5,000 to 6,000 workers are killed each year. Learn from the following reports of real workplace fatalities to avoid a similar fate.

An apprentice ironworker was killed when she fell through an unprotected vent shaft.

The 38-year-old victim was near the end of her three-year apprenticeship program and had worked at this construction site for a few months. The construction site was a large multi-story building that had several subcontractors working at the time.

She was working alone on the third level of the building, preparing to weld, and was positioning her equipment between two walls built around the vent opening. Workers had built a cover for the 4-foot by 9-foot (about one by 3 meters) vent opening, but that cover had been removed a few days earlier by workers from a different subcontractor. The cover had not been replaced.

The victim stepped back and fell through the opening, landing 30 feet (about 9 meters) below on a concrete floor. Another worker who just happened to walk through the area found her sometime later.

- Do you conduct weekly walk-around safety inspections, or more frequently when needed?
- Do you react quickly to correct hazards identified in the inspections?
- Are subcontractors made aware of their responsibility for the safety of all workers on the site?
- Are all floor openings and stairwell protected by guardrails, safety nets or covers?
- Do all workers on the site know how to report unsafe conditions?