Longshoring Safety Fatality File

Port Everglades worker killed while loading container on ship

A worker died in a ship's cargo hold in Panama City, Florida after the ship rocked and two tons of paper being hoisted onto the vessel crushed him against a wall, the Department of Labor said on Friday.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration, a division of the DOL, said that a group of three employees from Premier Bulk Stevedoring LLC, a Mobile, Alabama-based marine cargo contractor, were hoisting seven-foot-high rolls of paper five at a time using a shipboard crane onto the vessel M/V Weserborg. Each load weighed around two tons.

The crane operator didn't have a clear view of the employees in the hold below. When the ship pitched with a wave, one of the loads crushed a worker against the vessel's wall. The unnamed 28-year-old worker was killed.

Premier Bulk Stevedoring had failed to follow safety standards, including failing to ensure the crane operator was able to see the signalman who was guiding the load movement and not making cargo-handling supervisors complete a course in accident prevention. As a result, employees were exposed to swinging loads.

Premier Bulk Stevedoring was cited for one repeat and two serious violations and OSHA has proposed $43,750 in penalties. The company declined to comment.

"Their failure to follow established safety procedures caused a young worker to needlessly lose their life," Jose Gonzalez, OSHA's Mobile area office director, said in a press release.

Premier Bulk Stevedoring has also been issued a citation by OSHA in December 2020 after it found that a crane operator and the staff member guiding the driver had been working without being in each other’s direct line of sight. The company paid a $3,275 penalty.

Between 2011 and 2017, over half of all fatal workplace-related crane injuries involved the worker being struck by an object or equipment, according to BLS data.