Lumber on Conveyor Smashes Into Millworker

An experienced employee, with a reputation as a careful worker, died of injuries received when he was hit by a piece of lumber on a conveyor.

He and other workers were returning to their work stations after a temporary work shutdown. On the way to his station, this employee entered a restricted area which had a “Do Not Enter” sign posted. He bent over the conveyor as if he were looking for something. A piece of lumber came down the conveyor sideways, hit the end of the conveyor, and struck the man hard in the collarbone area.

He spun around and ran towards another worker, holding his hand to his neck. The fellow worker escorted the victim about 300 feet across the plant. He was bleeding heavily, breathing with difficulty, and highly agitated. He sat down at the foot of the stairs to the lunchroom and then collapsed to the floor.

An ambulance crew arrived a few minutes later and attempted to save the victim by putting pressure on the wound and administering oxygen. His heart stopped and lengthy resuscitation attempts failed to revive him. The wood had entered the victim’s body under the collarbone, puncturing a lung and breaking blood vessels. Loss of blood was the cause of death.

This usually careful worker made a couple of fatal decisions in this incident. Workers at this mill had been told not to leave their work stations during temporary work stoppages, but they regularly did anyway. Also, he entered a restricted, posted area, putting himself in the path of a hazard. This mishap pointed out the need for better machine guarding to prevent workers from entering restricted areas around the conveyor and to prevent them from being struck by lumber from the conveyor. An alarm system was also needed to give a warning the conveyor was about to start up.