Make Safety Personal Fatality File

Bricklayer Suffers Serious Shoulder Injury When Boss Ignores Plea to “Slow Down”

A bricklayer who had spent a lifetime laying bricks and blocks. On this particular day, he was assisting his boss in the dismantling of a scaffold that the bricklaying team had been working on. The boss was higher up on the scaffold and he was required to pass down to bricklayer pieces of the scaffold as they were dismantled. The boss was in a hurry. The client repeatedly called out to him to “slow down” as each item needed to be manhandled down the scaffold in a safe manner. Unfortunately, the boss didn’t listen. Despite repeated calls to slow down, the boss dropped a steel beam which struck our client on the shoulder and neck.

Dazed, in shock and in extreme pain, the bricklayer rested at the worksite. Eventually, he managed to get himself home. Although in extreme pain, he drove to his local GP seeking medical treatment. Scans followed which revealed a fractured right clavicle, rotator cuff tear, torn tendons and a fractured collarbone. He was then referred to a specialist for surgical repair.

Following surgery, the bricklayer had a long period of rehabilitation which included physiotherapy, massage and exercise programmes. Eventually, the client was given a certificate to try very light duties. Having reported to work, the boss gave him various jobs which included cleaning bricks, shovelling and emptying buckets of building material. Needless to say, the bricklayer found it almost impossible to do these duties as he had to favour his injured arm and shoulder. In favouring his injured arm and shoulder, the bricklayer started to develop symptoms in his good arm and shoulder. He had to stop work, having developed a

serious rotator cuff injury in his good shoulder. He had to go under the surgeon’s knife a second time and a further long period of rehabilitation followed. He didn’t give up. He eventually went back and tried light duties again, but once again his boss gave him jobs which aggravated both shoulders. Finally, he was told that there were no further light duties available to him.

As a result of these injuries, his ongoing pain and the treatment delved out to him by his employer, he developed serious depression. He was still in a lot of pain and found that any prospect of returning to the construction industry was dashed when he was told he may need to undergo further surgery. He has put off further surgery for as long as he can, worried that if it was not successful, he would have totally useless arms and shoulders.