

Migrant Worker Falls From Unprotected Stairway

A worker cleaning the third floor of a warehouse received massive head and chest injuries after falling more than 22 feet (seven meters) to the concrete floor below. No one witnessed the accident so it is unclear if the man fell from the unprotected temporary stairway or from a floor that extended only halfway across the building. Rescuers responded within six minutes. However, the man died two hours later in the operating room of a local medical center.

The 35-year-old man was an undocumented Spanish-speaking migrant worker who had worked at the site for six months. He was one of several migrant workers who were reportedly concerned about the dangerous work environment but were afraid to complain and risk losing their jobs.

Safety was almost non-existent at the worksite. Safety meetings were not held and employees were not told how to recognize or avoid unsafe work conditions such as the unprotected temporary stairway with no landing or handrail. Landings were not protected with guardrails and workers were not provided with personal protective equipment.

This unfortunate incident clearly illustrates how important it is to recognize and avoid unsafe work conditions such as unprotected edges and unsafe stairways. In this particular instance, the workers were migrant workers too afraid of losing their jobs to demand the safe working conditions they deserved.