Painters Take Fatal Fall From Radio Tower

Three painters plunged 1,200 feet (365 meters) to their death when the hoist used to hold them slipped. The company owner, his 16-year-old stepson and another young worker died when the owner’s wife lost her grip on the hoist line used to raise them up the 1,500 foot (457 meter) radio tower.

The woman had used the hoist several times before, but never with workers on the line. She lost control of the line when the portable capstan hoist used to raise them slipped around the capstan.

The owner had more than 20 years of experience. However, the company had no safety program in place and provided only minimal safety training. None of the workers wore adequate fall protection, including the owner who wore only a safety belt.

The other two workers wore a body harness but left the legs unfastened. The hoist used to lift the men was not designed to hoist personnel and may have been overloaded. Warning labels on the hoist stated this limitation.

Take responsibility for your own safety. Employees who work at elevations should always wear adequate fall protection and ensure that hoisting equipment used to lift them is designed to lift people and to prevent uncontrolled descent. Inspect your equipment on a daily basis to identify any damage or deficiencies.