Words Proved Eerily Prophetic

Wanting to hype his audience up in advance of an acrobatic performance, circus ringmaster Jesus Vasquez told the crowd that a screw that loosens or a cord that broke could be fatal. Little did he know how prophetic his words would prove to be.

A horrified audience of hundreds of adults and children watched aerial acrobat Roberto Valenzuela hurl to the ground during a Los Angeles-area performance. Valenzuela died instantly.

A preliminary investigation found that equipment connecting cables to cloth material had broken, throwing the performer headfirst to the ground. No net was there to save him.

Since Valenzuela was an independent contractor rather than an employee of the Circo Hermanos Vazquez, state safety regulator Cal-OSHA will probably not be able to take action against the circus.

Cal-OSHA spokesman Dean Fryer said that no net would be needed as long as a reliable safety system was being used during performances. Such a system was in place during Valenzuela’s performance, but somehow it failed.