Workplace Inspections Fatality File

Lack of safety inspections leads to 4 workers’ deaths

An OSHA inspection into the collapse of a parking garage under construction that killed four workers and injured nine others says lack of safety inspections by contractors played a significant part in the tragedy.

The garage being built for Miami Dade College’s Doral campus in Florida pancaked on Oct. 10, 2012, crushing four workers.

One injured worker was buried in the rubble for two hours before he could be rescued. That worker is still in a wheelchair and requires more physical therapy. The driver of a cement truck was trapped in his cab for hours. He died after emergency workers had to amputate his legs. The body of one worker couldn’t be recovered for more than a week because the site of the collapse was so unstable.

Students had to attend classes on other Miami-Dade campuses until January.

OSHA issued citations totaling $38,360 to general contractor Ajax Building Corp. and four subcontractors. The violations were categorized as serious.

The contractors failed to inspect 18 columns as required, according to OSHA. They also didn’t follow project drawings and instructions.

The garage was being built with prefabricated concrete pieces manufactured elsewhere. The practice is common, but it requires close supervision by engineers and contractors, according to experts who spoke with The Miami Herald.

Just two days before the collapse, a crane struck a column in the structure. That column was repaired, but attorneys for the victims say the contractors failed to check adjacent columns for damage.