

It Can Happen

Lessons From Losses - A Series of Errors

Janitor Falls from Personnel Platform Resting On Forklift Prongs and Dies In California

A 50-year old janitor (decedent) died when he fell from a personnel platform that had been lifted by a forklift. When he leaned out during a wall washing operation, the platform tilted and the decedent fell over the platform's guardrail dropping 12 feet to the concrete floor.

The top guard rail was 35 inches above the platform's base. ***(Industry standard guardrails are required to be 42-inches above the platform floor).***

The personnel platform had not been lifted by placing the forklift prongs into the channels in the bottom of the platform. The platform was just resting on the top of the forklift prongs since the decedent had lifted it from the side rather than the front. There was no means to secure the platform to the forks or mast. The decedent was not wearing fall protection. ***(The platform is required to be secured to either the forklift prongs or the mast to prevent it from separating from the forklift.)***

The decedent was not authorized to drive the forklift and, according to company management and two employees, had never driven the forklift prior to this incident. ***(Employees should not operate machinery until they are trained and authorized including instruction on elevating employees and proper equipment.)***

The forklift operator who had lifted the decedent to the 12 foot height, was not at the controls of the forklift when the decedent fell. ***(Forklift operators remain at the forklift controls when employees are in raised personnel platforms.)***

ACCIDENT SUMMARY FROM THE FACE* INVESTIGATIONS

The NIOSH Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program

The FACE program concentrates on investigations of fatal occupational injuries. This program has the goal to prevent fatal work injuries in the future. FACE aims to achieve this goal by studying the work environment, the worker, the task the worker was performing, the tools the worker was using, the energy exchange resulting in fatal injury, and the role of management in controlling how these factors interact. And make Recommendations to prevent similar deaths from occurring.