Atlantic Division, Naval Facilities Engineering Command

Accident Abstract

Accident Type: Fall from elevation during demolition
Injury: Paralysis
Type of Work: Demolition
Equipment: N/A

Description of the Accident:

A laborer fell approximately 17 feet while attempting to dismantle structural steel framing during a demolition operation. The employee had been issued a full body harness and lanyard by his employer but received no training for this application. In order to gain access to the work area, the employee climbed a built in ladder and walked the steel without being attached, a distance of approximately 20 feet, where he would begin to burn the steel. The employee cut through a steel angle then stepped out onto the same cut section which was not able to support the weight.

Direct Cause:

1) The employee was not attached to any part of the structure above his body capable of supporting 5000 lbs at the time of the accident. 100% fall protection for working levels above 6 feet was not maintained.

Contributing Causes:

1) The employer did not provide adequate training for the workers. The fall protection training provided to the workers covered motion stopping systems during use of an articulating boom platforms.
2) Other fall protection systems should have been used for this application.

Lessons Learned:

100 % fall protection is required for employees 6 feet or more above a working level. Contractors are required to evaluate the hierarchy of fall protection systems. Motion stopping systems should only be utilized after an evaluation proves that the use of a more conventional systems (ladders, scaffold, JLG) would cause a more hazardous condition or is not feasible. It is imperative that employers ensure workers that use fall protection equipment have received training on the safe use of such equipment. New EM 385 contract requirements dictate that the fall protection training shall be performed by a qualified person and verified in a written certification record.

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