Contract Warehouse Worker Caught and Crushed



INCIDENT

Mr. Smith was caught in between and crushed by equipment according to the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). The date of the tragedy was Dec 4/2013 and an investigation was launched by OSHA.

NEED TO KNOW

Ronald Smith was a 57 years old contract worker who was killed in December of 2013 while working at a warehouse owned by on – line amazon retailer located about 20 miles from Manhattan.

BUSINESS / REGULATIONS

Large companies such as Amazon, which has $60 billion a year in retail sales, frequently utilize temporary and contract employees to reduce costs and liabilities associated with full-time staff, including health insurance, retirement pay and workers' compensation.

STATISTICS

Just a few weeks after Ronald Smith died in New Jersey, ProPublica, an independent investigative news organization, released "Temporary Work, Lasting Harm," a study on safety hazards faced by Temporary workers.

Analyzing workers compensation records in five states, ProPublica found **the risk of on-the-job injury significantly higher for temporary workers than for permanent employees:**

- A 36 percent higher likelihood of injury for temp workers in Massachusetts
- 50 percent higher in California and Florida
- 66 percent higher in Oregon
- 72 percent higher in Minnesota

According to Bureau of Labor Statistics (B.L.S) in 2012, 708 contract workers died on the job in the United States, representing 16 percent of total workplace fatalities.

Due to reports of temporary workers suffer fatal injuries during the first days on the job, OSHA began to address who is responsible for safety conditions of temporary workers.

This initiative resulted in a correlated rise in inspections that examine how host employers treat temporary workers especially with regard to training.

Investigations have resulted from complaints about treatment of workers, both temporary and permanent at Amazon warehouses.

The safety concerns revealed at Amazon warehouses that there were long periods of work without adequate break time and requiring workers to stay on the job in extreme heat without proper ventilation.

All the fines and prosecutions will not bring back Mr. Smith. He left a family which included seven grandchildren. The grandchildren lost a loving grandfather.

There was no fanfare in his funeral but deep loss and pain for his family.

PREVENTION

The usual refrain is applicable in these situations. This “accident” was preventable. If it is preventable, them by logic, something was “not done” to prevent it from occurring.

In all these accident situations, there is a threefold test to meet the threshold of prevention:

- Proper and timely training of all employees, both temporary and permanent.
- Proper monitoring by supervisory staff if the workplace practices and protocols with respect to safety.
- Diligent record keeping of incidents, injuries and close calls / near misses in the workplace.