Fall from Loading Dock Kills Supervisor



Falling six feet (two meters) doesn’t seem like a lot, but it was enough to kill a 68-year-old supervisor who was climbing down a loading dock.

*Purnell was one of 48 employees who worked for a company that manufactured bowling equipment.The company had two safety officers, who devoted about 25 percent of their time to safety issues. On the day of the incident, they were located only a short distance (five minutes) from the site.

WHAT HAPPENED
Purnell was climbing down a loading dock (which he did on many occasions) to help co-workers. But this time he fell and struck his head on the asphalt driveway. Co-workers heard the “thud” and subsequently saw Purnell lying on the ground. Co-workers observed Purnell bleeding from the mouth and ears, so they immediately contacted paramedics. Purnell was soon transferred to hospital where he underwent a CT brain scan, which revealed serious head injuries, including a “left cerebellar edema.”

Purnell was hooked up to a life support system for three days. His family then requested that the life support be discontinued.

WORKERS TAKE HEED After the investigation, the following recommendations were made:

- Employees should use a safe and efficient means of climbing down from loading docks. For example, a stairway or ladder should be used. But in this case, no alternate pathway to the loading dock existed other than climbing.
- Workers should learn to recognize hazards and avoid unsafe behavior. In this tragedy, employees should have recognized the danger that Purnell put himself in.
- Employees should ensure they receive training in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

**The names aren’t real, but the incidents are. These accounts are based on actual fatality investigations.*