Forklift Worker Crushed Between Forklift and Material



INCIDENT

Fuyao forklift operator Ricky Patterson, 57, of Dayton died early March 22 after he was trapped between his forklift and a pallet holding more than 2,000 pounds of glass, according to police.

Video at the West Stroop Road plant captured the moment.

The video shows the pallet of glass shifted forward, according to police records. “Patterson then walks in between the forklift and the glass, grabs a strip cutter, and cuts the west side strap, causing the glass to crush him in the forklift.”

Multiple Fuyao employees assisted with containing the pallet of glass and extracting Patterson from the forklift.

NEED TO KNOW

It is an understatement to say a human being is not a match for 2000 pounds of glass in a confrontation.

BUSINESS / REGULATIONS

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration is investigating the events that led to Patterson’s death and have not returned calls seeking comment since the fatal accident.

OSHA officials said they would not comment on the case until the investigation is complete. Fuyao officials released a statement following the accident, calling Patterson a “valued colleague and friend,” vowing to work with federal and state officials while calling company safety “the top priority.”

The data supports the motion where government oversight exists, workplaces tend to be safer.

Death rates are rising in sectors where OSHA doesn’t have much presence, sector like transportation, utilities and hospitality.

With OSHA or agencies like it, oversight and standards address hazards. And standards force changes in workplace practices, which creates safer environments, OSHA needs a $100 million boost in its budget, to keep pace with inflation and deal with staffing levels.

According to figures OSHA provided the AFL-CIO, in fiscal year 2001 OSHA had 1,001 compliance employees, both inspectors an supervisory personnel.

Today, 2016 that number is lower. OSHA has 974 compliance staff. Of those, just 764 people are inspectors.

Fuyao, Moraine's largest employer with about 2,000 workers, was fined $100,000 by OSHA last year for "serious" safety violations. Employees have repeatedly expressed concern about workplace safety.

The United Auto Workers soundly lost a bid to organize the Fuyao plant last year. One concern the union and its local allies consistently expressed during a campaign to persuade workers to form a new bargaining unit was plant safety,

"We stand with the workers at Fuyao, who for some time now have been concerned about health and safety issues at the Moraine plant," replied the UAW.

Fuyao declined to comment citing the OSHA investigation.

STATISTICS

The number of fatal accidents in the nation are "quite disturbing," Seminario said. The rate of workplace deaths went up from 3.4 to 3.6 fatal incidents per 100,000 workers in 2016.

Safety enforcement agencies have gradually been "starved" of needed funds and staffing since 2001.

When companies are busier in a strong economy, accidents can happen, experts say. Workers can become tired and distracted.

A stronger economy means employers have "more resources to deal with the problems,"

About 40 percent of fatal workplace accidents involve some form of transportation, according to the government. Violence and injuries account for another 23 percent of deaths, the second most common cause. Exposure to harmful chemicals rose 22 percent in 2016 while fires and explosions declined 27 percent.

A stronger economy means more trucks on the road and busier distribution hubs. Factories and suppliers are busier. More demand is felt across industry.

In Ohio in 2016, private transportation and warehousing saw the highest number of on-the-job fatalities with 32, down by 4 from 2015.