Handyman Safety Fatality File



A 43-year-old self-employed handy man died after falling 25 feet from a house roof. The incident occurred while the victim was installing aluminum siding on the sides of the house. He and a co-worker were setting up anchors for a pole jack scaffold when the victim stepped on a bracket to test its strength. The bracket came loose from the building, causing the victim to fall 25 feet from the roof of the building to the driveway.

The incident occurred at a three-story wood frame house located in an urban area. The victim, who had been involved in renovating the house over the past eight years, was installing aluminum siding with the help of a second worker. The victim had been working on the project for two months and had completed the lower half of the building. To complete the upper half, he was preparing to use a pole-jack scaffold. This scaffold required mounting upright wooden poles near the side of the building. The poles were to be secured to the building by a bracket nailed to the roof and against the buildings side. Moveable metal jacks were to be positioned on the poles, and wooden planks placed across the jack's supports created the work platform.

On the day of the incident, a Monday, the victim and a co-worker were moving the scaffold from the front of the building to the rear. The two workers climbed a fire escape to the flat roof of the building and gathered their materials. At about 10:45 a.m., the victim completed securing the wooden brackets to the edge of the roof which would support the top of the poles for the scaffold. Wanting to test the brackets, the victim reportedly placed some boards across them and stepped on the boards. The brackets pulled loose from the building and the victim fell 25 feet to the asphalt driveway. The co-worker started screaming, alerting the neighbors who called for the police and EMS. The victim was transported to the local hospital, where he was pronounced dead three hours after the incident.

CAUSE OF DEATH

The county medical examiner determined that death was caused by blunt impact injuries of the skull and brain.

NJDOH FACE investigators concluded that, to prevent similar incident in the future, the following guidelines should be implemented:

- Workers must be properly trained and equipped to erect scaffolds.
- Use appropriate fall protection on all work at heights.
- Workers should examine the work site for hazards before starting a job.