Rooftop Fall Kills One Worker, Injures Another

On June 8, 2005, two window washers were working on a four storey building in Burlington, Massachusetts. While Jose Camara, 46, stayed on the roof and tended the rolling outrigger suspension support unit, Carlos Lopez, 33, was lowered to the windows below. Suddenly, the unit moved. It rolled across the rooftop and over the edge. As it fell down the side of the building, the unit struck Carlos and pulled both workers 50 feet to the ground below. Carlos was seriously injured; Jose was killed.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

According to OSHA's investigators, several things:

- The outrigger unit wasn't tied to a rooftop anchorage point;
- It wasn't equipped with sufficient counterweight; and
- The wheels were improperly installed.

Investigators also learned that even though both Jose and Carlos were wearing lifelines, these were affixed to the unit, not to an independent anchorage point on the roof, and parts of their safety harnesses and the lanyard were defective. Also, Jose, who was inexperienced in this field, had received little or no training on using the unit.

The Company has been cited by OSHA for alleged willful and repeat violations of safety standards.

Employers are responsible for providing a safe workplace. But you can double your protection by educating yourself as well. Be sure you receive proper training for the equipment you use and know how to inspect personal protection equipment for defects.