Slips, Trips, and Falls Fatality File



ST. PAUL: Painter dies in fall at library

A decorative painter lay fatally injured and alone overnight in the downtown St. Paul Public Library this weekend before his worried wife found him, according to the man's employer. After apparently falling from a ladder or scaffolding, Raymond Tatar was found unconscious but breathing Sunday morning inside the library, which is closed while undergoing a two-year $15.9 million renovation. He died Sunday night at Regions Hospital. Janice Tatar, concerned when she couldn't contact her 46-year-old husband, had driven about 320 miles from the couple's northwestern Illinois home to find out what became of him. "We don't know most of the details, but we know it happened sometime Saturday and he wasn't found until Sunday morning," said Jacqueline Beeken, CEO of New Millennium Inc., of Suttons Bay, Mich., the company that employed Tatar. The firm was restoring the historic library's ceilings. It is the third time in recent weeks that a Twin Cities worker has died in a construction-related fall, and the Minnesota Occupational Health and Safety Division is investigating each death. Tatar wasn't scheduled to work Saturday and his bosses in Michigan believed he was taking the weekend off. But Beeken said she later learned the painter had told members of the construction management team in St. Paul that he was working Saturday afternoon. Tatar was last seen by some other workers about 2:30 p.m. Saturday inside the library, which has been closed since 2000 and is scheduled to reopen this fall. "He must have had something he felt he needed to finish," Beeken said. Paul Oberhaus, whose Bloomington-based Cost Planning Management International is managing the project, declined to comment. He also declined to say whether regular rounds are made at the construction site. Tatar's wife was the first to become concerned. From the family's home in Savanna, Ill., she placed several calls to her husband Saturday, and when she didn't hear from him she got on the road. "She drove up from Savanna, to see what the problem was, I guess. And she went to the job site and found his truck there," Beeken said. She asked a maintenance worker to look around, but the man saw no one. So Tatar's wife asked if she could look around. Together, they went in and searched again. This time, they found Tatar at the bottom of some stairs, Beeken said. Initial police reports stated he might have fallen four flights, but details were not available Monday from the St. Paul Fire Department, which responded to the accident. Considering the severity of Tatar's head injuries, Beeken said it's not clear whether he could have survived if he had been found and received immediate medical attention. Janice Tatar could not be reached for

comment. Raymond Tatar was the supervisor of a small crew and was meticulous about safety, Beeken said. But on Saturday, he was working alone and wasn't wearing the safety belt required when working on ladders and scaffolding – both in violation of company policy. "He was our safety officer, he was our job site supervisor, and he stressed safety continuously. So why he was on a ladder, why he was alone, we just don't know and never probably will," Beeken said. "He was just an excellent, excellent employee and we are going to miss him," she said of Tatar, who had worked for New Millennium Inc. since May 2001, but had been a painter since 1975.