Steel Beams Fall as Chain Unhooked



A worker was crushed by a load of steel when it was knocked off a truck.

She was assisting at the receiving end of an operation loading 50-foot steel I-beams onto a truck. Her job was to free the chain loops from the loads of beams that had been positioned on the truck by an overhead traveling crane. She had been standing on one end of two stacks of beams and was unhooking the slings and freeing the chain.

While she was doing this, the crane operator was releasing tension on the loop of the chain and was sliding it off the ends of the beams at the other end of the load.

When the crane operator thought the latter loop was free of the beams he started to hoist it. The loop caught on the ends of the beams, upsetting the steel and throwing the worker off the truck. Three 50-foot beams fell on her, killing her instantly.

This incident might have been averted if there had been two people working on the load, at opposite ends of the platform. The senior person of the two should have been in radio communication with the operator of the crane, making sure the chains were free and both workers were off the truck before there was any crane movement.