Steel Dock Plate Falls and Kills Two

Could This Have Been You?

On average, 5,000 to 6,000 workers are killed each year. Learn from the following reports of real workplace fatalities to avoid a similar fate.

Two 53-year-old male maintenance mechanics died when a suspended steel dock plate fell on them.

The dock leveler was being returned to service after being removed for repairs. The two men – both long-time employees of the company – were working on placing the dock leveler back in service, a task they had performed many times before.

Even though the company had a written procedure for this task, one that followed the manufacturer's recommended procedure, the procedure was not followed. Instead, the victims welded a piece of pipe to the top of the dock plate, placed a chain through the pipe and attached it to the hook of a small deck crane. The dock crane was then used to move the plate into position.

While the dock plate was suspended, the victims moved beneath the plate and started connecting the hydraulic hoses. They did not engage the safety bar or block the plate in the raised position. The two men were working under the suspended load when the weld broke. One victim was struck and fell away from the dock plate. The other worker was trapped underneath.

Employees should never place themselves under a suspended load without first ensuring that the load will not move or fall. Had the victims used a block, chock, cribbing or safety bar, this incident might have been prevented. Also, employees should follow recommended procedures when replacing dock levelers. The company had a standard procedure in place that had been developed by the manufacturer and used in the past without incident. Before changing standard procedures, a thorough analysis should be conducted to ensure that all hazards are abated.