Three-Ton Machine Falls on Worker



A large piece of equipment was being installed in a new paper mill. Two workers were making the final adjustments to a three-ton (2.72-tonne) machine suspended overhead by four threaded rods. They were supporting one end of the equipment with two timbers set on top of two hydraulic jacks. They would jack up the equipment about one inch (2.54 centimeters) at a time and then one employee would climb a set of portable stairs to tighten the nuts on the threaded rods. Then they would switch to the other end of the suspended machine and repeat the operation. After one end was jacked up, the machine fell and crushed one worker to death. The other worker narrowly missed being killed.

When something out of the ordinary is occurring in the workplace, chances for injury increase. Safe operating procedures for routine tasks may be carefully developed and observed, but one-time or occasional jobs such as equipment installation may not be subject to the same careful planning. In this case, the job was planned poorly, with no means of securing or stabilizing the load: no blocking, shoring or cribbing. Written procedures are needed for installation of new equipment, along with training and close supervision. Equipment used for lifting should be inspected regularly. Hydraulic jacks should be checked for deterioration of lines, leaks and mushroomed heads. Rigging and other lifting equipment must be examined before each use to prevent incidents such as this.