Truck Tarping Fatality File

Truck Driver Has Fatal Fall While Tarping Flatbed Trailer

A 57-year-old long-haul semi-truck driver died after he fell to the ground while tarping a flatbed trailer. He had been employed by the flatbed cargo hauling business for 13 years. It was his first day back at work after having spent a month recovering from back sprain injuries caused by a previous traffic collision. The weather was sunny and dry. He had picked up a load of sheet aluminum wrapped in plastic from a nearby rolling mill and returned to his employer?s yard to tarp it. A mechanic placed a tarp on the rear of the trailer deck with a forklift and drove away. A co-worker leaving the yard waved to the driver who was standing by his truck. No one else saw the driver until an hour later when a worker driving into the yard noticed the driver laying unresponsive and bleeding on the ground below the driver?s side cab steps. First responders arrived soon after being called but could not save the driver. The coroner determined that the driver died of traumatic head injuries caused by a fall.

As the incident had no witnesses, investigators presumed from physical evidence that the driver had climbed on top of the trailer, placed tarps at the front and rear ends, and at some point afterward fell around 51 inches to the ground on the passenger?s side. Evidence at the scene suggested that the driver got up after falling, walked around the front of the tractor, climbed into the cab, and, while exiting the cab, fell again to the ground where he was found. The employer?s Accident Prevention Plan (APP) or safety program lacked a requirement policy for drivers to use specific procedures to safely access, exit, and tarp flatbed trailers. Other possible contributing factors were that the driver was wearing loosely tied sneakers and in poor health with coronary and kidney diseases. The employer did not follow state requirements to report workplace fatalities within eight hours and to leave equipment unmoved at the incident scene.