Worker Died After Trying to Save Another



A 53-year-old construction worker died after trying to warn another worker to get away from a wall at a building demolition site in Wilkes-Barre, PA. The wall became unstable and collapsed after the building's roof was removed in early December 2006.

The two-story wall came down on Edward Widdick and another worker, Kevin Wehrer. Widdick, who was trapped beneath debris for about 15 minutes, died from his injuries 18 days later. Wehrer, who was injured, survived. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) investigators determined that workers had failed to brace the wall after the roof was removed. They also determined that Wehrer, who was new to the job, had not received safety training.

Widdick, who is survived by his wife, Brenda L. Bourbeau and two daughters, loved to hunt and fish and will be remembered for his loyalty to friends and his sense of humor.

Widdick's employer, A.R. Popple Construction, was issued three serious citations, including failure to stabilize a wall of more than one story with lateral supports. The other citations allege failure to train employees to avoid unsafe conditions and control or eliminate hazards, and failure to have a competent person inspect work to detect hazards caused by weakened or deteriorated building conditions. The small construction company is facing proposed OSHA penalties of almost $15,000.