

FALL PREVENTION AND SAFETY: A LESSON LEARNED



One of the best ways to improve safety culture is to learn from the gaps and opportunities in other programs. Check out the scenario below, and see if your risk management efforts can be improved to avoid a similar incident.

THE INCIDENT



WORKER PROFILE

Experienced mason who had been with the organization for several years and was known by the supervisor as a good, dependable employee



SOURCE OF INJURY

Fell approximately 10 to 12 feet from the second level of tubular scaffolding, through an opening in the scaffold handrail



INJURY TYPE

Employee struck his head, resulting in a severe closed-head injury



MORE DETAILS

No explanation was given as to why the handrail was removed or why the employee was not appropriately tied off. Due to the injury, the employee could not provide critical information concerning the handrail and lanyard. Safety responsibilities were shared by the company owner and a part-time safety director.

A very minor history of falls was present. By all appearances, the appropriate controls were in place:

- ▶ A formal, written safety program was in place at the time of the accident
- ▶ Jobsite safety meetings were conducted on a weekly basis with sporadic documentation
- ▶ A “competent person” for fall protection and scaffolding was present on every jobsite
- ▶ Management commitment was evaluated as either average or above average in all areas
- ▶ The safety program and its ability to control exposures was evaluated as excellent

LESSONS LEARNED

- ▶ **Safety programs and policies are only as strong as their weakest link.** Any safety program is only as effective as the employees who make choices to follow the policies/procedures, and their supervisors who choose to enforce or ignore them. If, while on a jobsite, anyone observes an act or condition that is unsafe, and no one proactively corrects the situation (employee or management), the program is not effective.
- ▶ **Jobsite observations are critical.** If anyone observes an unsafe act or condition, it most likely is not the first time it has occurred on jobsites associated with the contractor. [Use the incident pyramid theory](#), which outlines that prior to this serious loss, numerous at-risk acts/hazards existed, close calls/near misses occurred, several minor incidents occurred, and then a major event (this loss) occurred. If uninterrupted, it is very likely that a fatality will eventually occur.

KNOW HOW TO REPORT

If an injury or loss should occur, it's imperative that employers know how to report it appropriately. Check out our [infographic](#) with key tips for OSHA 300 reporting.

For additional safety information, check out our other [resources](#).