

HAZARD ALERT

FALL-RELATED ACCIDENTS

Over a 10-day period from June 27th through July 5th, 2005, three Virginia mineral miners were injured (two seriously) in fall-related accidents. Fortunately, none of these falls resulted in a fatality. Failure to use fall protection was the primary contributing factor in the two fall-from-elevation serious injuries. The victim in the non-serious injury fall incident avoided serious injury because he was wearing proper fall protection. Miners, supervisors, and mine operators and contractors should remember that working in areas where fall hazards exist presents serious risks. Take proper precautions before work is performed at any height.



On June 27, 2005, a contract welder with 30 years of experience was seriously injured when he fell approximately 22 feet from an elevated platform/catwalk. The victim, a Virginia certified mine foreman, was dismantling a large bin used to load rail cars as part of a demolition project when he cut two hangers that supported the catwalk he was standing on and caused the catwalk to fail. The victim, who was not wearing a safety harness, broke his pelvis in three places, cracked two vertebrae, and broke a toe.



On July 5, 2005, a Virginia certified surface blaster (an independent contractor employee) with more than 11 years of experience was seriously injured when he fell approximately 30 feet off a highwall while measuring burden and inspecting drill holes in preparation of loading a shot. The blaster was working near the edge of the bench without a safety harness when he lost his balance and fell. The blaster fractured a vertebrae and received cuts and abrasions from the fall.



On June 29, 2005, a miner with 2 years of experience was injured when he fell from an elevated work platform while dismantling a secondary crusher. The victim, who was wearing proper fall protection, was washing down the work area when he apparently slipped on some old grease and fell partially through a hole in the platform. The victim fractured a rib when the D-ring on his safety harness got caught between his ribcage and the edge of the hole. The safety harness kept him from falling more than 20 feet and receiving more serious injuries.

Best Practices

- Workers must be trained and reminded to examine their work areas for unsafe conditions prior to starting work and frequently thereafter.
- Always wear fall protection (properly secured safety harness) when working in elevated work areas where there is a danger of falling.
- Train all personnel to recognize potential fall hazards and to follow safe work procedures.