

INDUSTRY ALERT

PLEASE POST

Critical Injury

PLEASE POST

Driver falls from edge of truck deck, fracturing his leg and ankle

What happened?

An experienced driver was alone, installing a CB antenna on the rack at the rear of a lumber transport truck at 3:20 a.m. before starting his shift. He stood on the rear step deck of the truck as he installed the antenna. The weather was wet and foggy and the yard was muddy, as was the truck deck.

As the driver turned, he slipped off the deck and fell 37 inches (94 centimetres) to the ground on the passenger side of the truck in between the truck and trailer that were parked parallel to one another. He felt pain in his leg, crawled around to the driver side of the truck and pulled himself into the seat to plug in his cell phone and call for help. He was taken by ambulance to hospital with a broken ankle and a hairline fracture below his knee. He was off work for several weeks.

Why did it happen?

The weather was wet and the yard and truck deck were muddy. The previous driver of the truck reported that the truck was working fine, as was the CB radio. The CB antenna being installed was a personal piece of equipment. The driver had not been directed by the company to install it. His boots were not laced up at the time of the incident.

How can it be prevented?

While section 85 of the Regulations for Industrial Establishments requires the use of a fall protection system when a worker is exposed to the hazard of falling more than 10 feet (3 metres), this incident clearly shows that serious injuries can be caused by a fall from a much lower height. That's why certain basic precautions need to be taken even in situations that don't appear at first glance to involve much of a hazard.

An important part of any effective company housekeeping program is a general understanding by everyone that even seemingly trivial lapses in housekeeping can cause serious injuries. Everyone also needs to understand that clear, clean and dry work spaces are just as important outdoors as in.

Because of the nature of the work, it's inevitable that some tasks will have to be done outdoors in less than ideal conditions. That's why it's so important to take special precautions. In this case, the deck area of the lumber truck should have been cleared of mud before any work was done in that area. Better yet, because the installation of the CB antenna was not an urgent or even required task, the driver should have postponed it until conditions were better for doing that type of work.

Dangling laces on footwear can be a safety hazard even in the best conditions. Work boots must be laced up at all times.

www.ofswa.on.ca



Although the description of circumstances arises from an actual situation, this Industry Alert does not reflect the final analysis of the situation, nor is it meant to assign blame on the part of any person or member firm. For further information, contact OFSWA at 705-474-7233. For details on Ministry of Labour prosecutions regarding recent health and safety incidents in Ontario workplaces, visit www.labour.gov.on.ca and click on "News Releases".