

INDUSTRY ALERT

CRITICAL INJURY

Harness not tied off, trucker fractures back in fall from chip van

What happened?

The operator of a chip van was climbing the back ladder of the van, holding the tarp rope as he climbed. The rope suddenly broke and the trucker fell to the ground from a height of less than three metres (10 feet). He suffered a back fracture.

Why did it happen?

The trucker was wearing a fall protection harness but it was not tied off. The tarp rope he was holding as he climbed had obviously not been inspected for some time.

How can it be prevented?

Section 85 of the Regulations for Industrial Establishments requires the use of a harness and lifeline adequately secured to a fixed support whenever a worker is exposed to a hazard of falling from a height of more than three metres (10 feet). This incident is not the first one to show that a fall from a height of considerably less than three metres can cause serious injury and possible death. After this incident, the company put out a notice to all contractors stating that the ladder of a truck is an access point and no work is to be performed while on it unless the worker is properly harnessed. The notice stated that truckers can grab a tarp rope while on the ladder in order to dislodge it, but they must not pull on the rope.

Holding a tarp rope or cable while climbing or descending the ladder of a chip van is not adequate fall protection even if the rope or cable is in perfect condition. Tarp roping should nevertheless be inspected regularly to ensure that it's in good working order. The anchor point of a proper fall protection system must be approved by an engineer and be capable of withstanding the forces that would be applied to it in a free fall incident.

The ideal fall protection system is one that provides access to the top of loads of bulk material or logs while eliminating the need for harnesses or lifelines. Some forestry firms use free-standing cages or portable overhead systems with guard rails that allow safe access to the tops of loads of chips or logs. OFSWA has published a *Fall Protection Resource Guide* that explains fall protection requirements in forestry operations and describes in detail a number of systems currently in use or under development. For more information about this publication, contact OFSWA at (705) 474-7233 or talk to your local OFSWA Consultant Trainer.

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