

Crushed between lift and joist--Insp # 1550391 South Eastern Fire Protection Labor Services, LLC

A **42 year old male** employee was **crushed between** the controls of an aerial lift and a ceiling joist in the garden center at a Lowe's store while replacing fire suppression plumbing. The crew consisted of two people, the employee and his nephew.

Southeastern Fire Protection Labor Company LLC directly hires employees to perform the work as it is an on-line labor service company that connects certified pipe-fitters with jobs throughout the country. Materials and heavy equipment are provided at the job site either by the job site company or another contractor on site. All the employee's tools are personal tools.

The victim's nephew explained that the night of the incident was the first day on the job. The job was to remove old pipes and replace them with new pipes for the fire extinguishing system in the garden center at a Lowe's Home improvement store. The general contractor rented and provided an aerial lift for their employees as well as the pipe-fitters to use when needed. It was determined that the victim was the only one to use the lift that day.

After working about six hours, the victim started having difficulty operating the aerial lift. The victim told employees of the general contractor about the difficulties with the lift while on a break. He explained that the lift would not elevate or lower as directed, but would instead, lurch up and down after hesitation. He also stated that the locomotion of the lift itself was unreliable as it would not respond to prompts and made weird noises.

A scissor lift was offered for use instead until someone could look at the aerial lift to determine the problem. The nephew explained that the victim agreed but wanted to finish one last part before switching the equipment. He was instructed to stay at ground level and prepare the new piping to be placed by the victim.

He had not heard his uncle say anything for a while and decided to see if he needed anything so yelled to him and received no response. Approaching the lift, he thought that the victim was resting his head on the front rail of the lift looking down. After attempting to get a response, he realized that the lift had caught the victim between the front guard rail of the aerial lift and a ceiling joist of the roof of the garden center. Once the lift was lowered, it was discovered that the victim's neck had been crushed due to the incident. The nephew explained that he was standing with his back to the victim and did not witness the incident.

A third-party safety consultation company was hired to recover the lift involved to give an unbiased assessment of its functions. According to that evaluation, the initial operations assessment demonstrated no mechanical or operational issues with the lift. The lift controls responded appropriately to all operations and all functions were observed as normal.

Crossville Police Department stated that the incident was a drug overdose as a large amount of drugs were found on the victim at the time of the emergency response. Toxicology reports support this finding.

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Citation(s) as Originally Issued

A complete inspection was conducted at the accident scene. Some of the items cited may not directly relate to the fatality.

It is not known if the victim had expired due to substance overdose before the trauma was inflicted. There were no witnesses to the incident. No violations to the standard were identified as a result of the investigation and no citation was issued.



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