

Deadly drops

Collapses aren't the only source of danger when performing demolition

The accident: A construction crew on a large renovation was working on a rooftop demolition project. The five-man crew was manually removing tar, gravel and wooden planking from the roof to expose the steel gridwork beneath, making chainsaw cuts to the planking to ease removal. One of the workers moved too close to an opening, and fell 26 feet to a waste heap below. The worker went into cardiac arrest and was later pronounced dead at a hospital from a ruptured aorta.

The bottom line: A post-accident investigation determined that, as the morning progressed, the crew removed more and more of the planking, exposing themselves to increased danger. The chainsaw cuts to the planking made just prior to the accident were in close proximity to the 10- by 10-foot opening where the worker fell.

Demolition can be challenging because of the unpredictable nature of the work. When dismantling a structure, you may not have all the information you need about how the building was constructed or its current condition. Be on the lookout for unexpected hazards



Illustration by Don Lomax

and take extra precautions.

Planning and preparation: Prior to beginning the project, your employer and foreman will have identified and reviewed potential hazards and created a plan to dismantle the structure as safely as possible, and minimizing the potential for collapse. Remember, variations to the plan could create unforeseen consequences that put you or your fellow crew members at risk, so don't take any shortcuts.

Putting safety first: Your designated safety person will develop, implement and enforce a comprehensive safety program. Although you should always follow your safety program to the letter, it's

particularly important to be diligent when working on a project that poses multiple dangers. Demolition work performed at height puts you at risk from falls and collapses.

Adapting to the site: OSHA standards would normally require floor openings be guarded by a either a standard railing and toeboards, or a cover capable of supporting the maximum intended load. However, in a situation when you're removing the entire roof, neither railings nor covers would work or make sense. In this situation, personal protective equipment in the form of lifelines and harnesses should have been provided to the crew. **EW**

Information for this Safety Watch is from an accident report (FACE MA-92-07), the Center for Disease Control's NIOSH Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation program, www.cdc.gov/niosh/face, and OSHA Standards 29 CFR 1926.500 (b) and 1926.500 (f)(5)(ii). It is meant for general information only.

Date of safety talk: _____ Leader: _____
 Attending: _____

