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OSHA News Release

2005 - 06/09/2005 - OSHA Cites Contractors Following Worker's Fatal Fall from George Washington Bridge

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OSHA Regional News Release

U.S. Department of Labor
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Region 2

Region 2 News Release: **05-1001-NEW/BOS 2004-150**
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Contact: Ted Fitzgerald
Phone: (617) 565-2074

OSHA Cites Contractors Following Worker's Fatal Fall from George Washington Bridge

NEW YORK -- A fall from the George Washington Bridge that killed an ironworker Feb. 7 could have been prevented if his employer had ensured proper fall protection, reports the U.S. Labor Department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

OSHA's inspection found that employees of Imperial Iron Works Inc., a Bronx-based steel erection contractor, were exposed to falls of 70 feet while working without fall protection on top of the anchorage house and on a catwalk that lacked required guardrails.

As a result, OSHA issued Imperial a willful citation with a proposed fine of \$28,000 for failure to provide fall protection. OSHA defines a willful violation as one committed with an intentional disregard of, or plain indifference to, the requirements of the Occupational Safety and Health Act and regulations.

"This case is a stark illustration of what can and does happen when employers don't ensure that effective fall protection is supplied and used," said Richard Mendelson, OSHA's Manhattan area director. "Had proper safeguards been in place, this accident would have been avoided."

Imperial was also issued five serious citations and fined an additional \$8,000 for unprotected openings at three ladderway access points; employee exposure to being struck by falling objects; unsecured work platforms on scaffolding; an ungrounded electric grinder, and a broken grounding pin on an extension cord. A serious citation is issued when death or serious physical harm are likely to result from a hazard about which the employer knew or should have known.

VRH Construction Corp. of Englewood, N.J., the project's general contractor, was issued three serious citations and fined \$8,000 for unprotected openings at three ladderway access points; employee exposure to being struck by falling objects, and absence of ladder cages for fixed ladders used to access catwalk work areas.

Each company has 15 business days from receipt of its citations and proposed penalties to elect to comply with them, request and participate in an informal conference with the OSHA area director or contest them before the independent Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission. The investigation was conducted by OSHA's Manhattan area office, telephone: (212) 620-3200.

Employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthful workplace for their employees. OSHA's role is to assure the safety and health of America's workers by setting and enforcing standards; providing training, outreach and education; establishing partnerships; and encouraging continual improvement in workplace safety and health. For more information, visit www.osha.gov.

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Occupational Safety & Health Administration
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20210