

DEADLY Mistakes

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Fatal Events: On
Nov. 9, 2005, a 32-

year-old Hispanic construction worker was killed when he was struck by a masonry saw blade.

Investigative Findings: The worker's job was to cut a window opening in a concrete block building. He was working 6 feet above ground on a tubular welded scaffold and was making the cut with the upper quadrant of the masonry saw blade. This type of cut tends to pinch the blade and produce kickback. The employee was cutting near the top of the window opening when the saw kicked back with such force that he could not control it. The saw blade fatally struck the victim on the left side of his neck.

The operator's manual for the saw contained clear warnings. However, at the time of the investigation, the operator's manual was still wrapped in plastic and had never been used. The victim had taken part in several safety training programs but had not received instruction on the safety requirements of the saw he was using or on the potential for kickback.

Discussion: Construction accidents continue to be the leading cause of work fatalities. The labor department in recent years has emphasized safety training for workers and has provided

free consultative services in work safety for the construction industry. The department also provides outreach services to the Hispanic workers. Training is available in Spanish, and NCDOL trainers use Labor One, the department's mobile training classroom, to provide training classes on construction sites.

Recommendations:

- ✘ Only qualified employees should operate dangerous tools and equipment.
- ✘ Employees should be trained in the hazards associated with work tools.
- ✘ First aid services and provisions for medical care must be made available by the employer for employees.
- ✘ The employer must require employees to wear appropriate personal protective equipment when they are exposed to hazardous conditions.
- ✘ When power tools are designed with safety guards, the tools must be operated with the guards in place.
- ✘ Electric power tools should be double insulated or properly grounded.
- ✘ Operators should know what cutting methods can create dangerous kickbacks.
- ✘ Operators should avoid standing directly behind saws.