



May 1992

ALASKA FACE Facts

Department of Health and Social Services
Division of Public Health-Section of CHEMS
Occupational Injury Prevention Program

Police Officer Dies in 41-Foot Fall from Roof of Fire Training Tower



On May 3, 1992, a 39-year-old, male police officer (the victim) sustained severe head injuries as a result of a fall of 41 feet from the roof of a four-story fire training tower. He died as a result of these injuries on May 4, 1992. The victim was participating in a mountain rescue training exercise called a "vertical lower". This maneuver involved the lowering of a mock casualty in a rescue litter and a medical attendant from the roof to simulate the rescue of an injured person in mountainous terrain. As the victim assisted three other participants move the litter off the retaining wall ledge of the training tower, the 400-pound litter fell. The victim was pulled from the roof as he either attempted to prevent the litter from falling or could not let go of the litter. He struck his head on the asphalt pavement below. The mock casualty and medical attendant also fell, suffering serious but nonfatal injuries. The only personal protective equipment used was a fire helmet worn by the mock casualty. The victim was examined in the local hospital emergency room and evacuated by air transport to a major trauma care facility in another state. He died the following morning.

The FACE investigator concluded that, in order to prevent similar occurrences, employers should:

- ensure that hazardous training exercises have an assigned safety officer and a sufficient number of instructors to enable adequate monitoring of participant activities
- ensure that a secondary means of fall protection is in place for all participants on training towers
- ensure that the load line is completely reset in the brake system immediately after each "vertical lower" exercise
- ensure that protective helmets are worn by all participants during training exercises
- ensure that live loads (individuals rather than substitute weights or dummies) are not used in rescue litters during training exercises
- ensure that training course participants understand how all system components interact in complex load line/braking mechanisms.

To view previous FACE reports please visit the Occupational Injury Prevention Program website:

http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chems/occupation_injury

or

Call or fax your request to:

907-269-5221 (phone) 907-269-5236 (fax)

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