

LIFTING HOOK ACCIDENT

The Story

Inattention to detail and an apparent material defect combined to cause the death of one man and injury to another on a pile driving operation in the Persian Gulf.

Prior to a pile being driven, pad eyes attached to the pile had to be removed. Two workers were placed in a personnel basket and raised approximately 80 feet into the air to accomplish the burning work. The raising and lowering of the basket was controlled by a small air-operated winch. When the work was completed, lowering of the basket was started. While the basket was still approximately 35 feet in the air above the barge, the lifting cable came in contact with the surrounding structure, allowing the cable to slack and the personnel basket to unhook and fall. The lifting hook was not provided with a safety latch nor was it otherwise moused to prevent disengagement of the lifting wire. The basket struck the center deck bracing of the barge and then fell overboard an additional 15 feet into the water.

Both men were wearing Coast Guard approved work vests. One man surfaced and was retrieved from the water and sent to the local hospital for his injuries. The second man did not surface and was retrieved from the seabed approximately 10 to 12 minutes later by divers. He was found lying about six feet from the basket. The man was given artificial respiration and also sent to the same local hospital where he was pronounced dead. Death was attributed to drowning. It was also noted that the deceased had received a severe blow on the right side of his head.

Why the man's work vest did not bring him to the surface is unknown. His body weight was small and he was not weighted down with tools or equipment. The Coast Guard investigating officer requested that the vessel owners provide the vest worn by the victim for examination. Owners reported that the vest had been stowed with all the others during the confusion and was therefore unidentifiable.

Lesson Learned

To avoid the possibility of the same unidentified work vest (possibly faulty) being used again, the owners ordered that all of the vests be disposed of upon receipt of new ones from the U.S. As a result of this casualty, company directives have been issued that no personnel lifting will be done without use of a lifting hook with

a safety latch.

Prevention Through People



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