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Naval Facilities Engineering Command

Abstract of an Accident

ACCIDENT TYPE: Fall
INJURY: Fatality
TYPE OF WORK: Painting 1000 ft high Towers
EQUIPMENT: Two Point Scaffold

DESCRIPTION OF MISHAP

The Site consists of 1000 foot towers for radio transmission. The towers were being scraped and painted. Two point scaffolds are used to travel up the tower to gain access to the Beeche platform which is a series of three scaffolds joined together to form a working platform which surrounds the tower being painted. Cable holding scaffold to the tower snapped causing two workers to fall 67 feet. One worker remained in the scaffold when the scaffold lines became taught but second worker fell out of the scaffold and fell an additional 180 feet to his death.

DIRECT CAUSE

- No fall protection equipment was worn by the employees.
- Scaffold controller was not working properly. Up meant down and down meant up.

INDIRECT CAUSES

- Equipment procedure change initiated by the crews which was being practiced for several weeks, tied the traveling scaffold to the tower approximately 70 feet below the Beeche working platform. This requires a crew member to lower the traveling scaffold to take up the slack in the cable created by the Beeche being lowered as they completed work. In lowering the scaffold an error was made and the scaffold was trying to raise itself. The cable securing the scaffold to the tower snapped and the scaffold fell ejecting the victim from the scaffold to his death.
- Employees took off their fall protection equipment when working on the Beeche working platform.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Insure that fall protection equipment is worn at all times when in the scaffold or on the tower.
 - Do not make changes to procedures for equipment without notifying and getting approval from supervisors and the equipment manufacturer before changes are put into operations.
 - All equipment shall be maintained by the contractor to be in safe and good working order in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations.
 - Contractor shall take immediate action to repair or replace damaged equipment.
 - Contractor shall ensure that all damaged or unsafe equipment be removed from service and tagged "Not For Use" or "Unsafe"
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