



Worker Injured by Unguarded Machinery and Rescue Delayed by Poor Communication

WHAT HAPPENED:

A worker was changing light bulbs in a rooftop mechanical penthouse when he apparently tripped, fell, and struck his head. Upon regaining consciousness, his glasses were lost and he was unable to clearly see to exit the space. While attempting to “feel” his way out, he placed his wrist on an operating belt and pulley. This caused severe laceration of his wrist. The worker attempted to stop the bleeding and continued trying to get out of the penthouse. He apparently collapsed or fell, narrowly missing another unguarded pulley on a different unguarded machine. Fortunately, this did not cause further injury. The worker eventually made his way to the exit. At some point he called for assistance on his radio but there was a significant time delay before assistance arrived. His co-workers assisted him from the rooftop and he was rushed to the hospital.

WHAT CAUSED IT:

The direct cause of this injury was unguarded equipment. The root cause of this injury is the failure of maintenance staff to replace equipment guards as part of the work process. Contributing factors include: other workers and supervisors seeing unguarded belts and pulleys and failing to take corrective action either through direct intervention or submission of a work order to have the moving parts safeguarded, failure of supervisors to require replacement of guards at the conclusion of the work activity. No specific trip hazards were identified that contributed to the initial fall.



The probable cause of the time delay for rescue assistance was poor communication. Apparently co-workers heard the call for assistance but had assumed it was to help with a portion of the work. There was apparently no mention of injury in the call for help.

CORRECTIVE ACTIONS: To address this incident, this department did the following:

A program to inspect and correct all deficiencies in mechanical rooms was initiated. To ensure employee compliance with safety requirements, supervisors and management will conduct periodic inspections of machine rooms. Supervisors should discuss the need for clear communication in emergency situations.