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Naval Facilities Engineering Command

Abstract of an Accident

97-2

ACCIDENT TYPE: Fall Mishap
INJURY: Fluid on Brain; Four Cracked Vertebra
TYPE OF WORK: Demolition/Repair Central Heating Plant and Boiler
EQUIPMENT: Tyvex Suit, Respirator Protection

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACCIDENT:

An asbestos abatement worker was seriously injured when he fell 17 feet through an unprotected 4x4 floor opening. The worker was observed standing inside of the warning lines which had been installed to indicate the floor opening. It appeared that the worker took a shortcut and stepped on the top of a boiler when the mag brick gave way causing him to fall striking his head on a cement pillar knocking him unconscious and he fell through the hole.

DIRECT CAUSE:

Floor opening was not adequately protected.

CONTRIBUTING CAUSES:

- Worker was not properly trained in the recognition of fall hazards.
- Worker was not wearing required personnel protection equipment.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Contractors must ensure all personnel receive required training so they can recognize a fall hazard and take action to eliminate the hazard or provide engineering controls to protect employees.
- Ensure a demolition plan is prepared by a competent person and is based on engineering and asbestos survey for the safe dismantling and removal of all components and debris. A copy of the plan must be provided to the government official in charge.
- Each employee engaged in the demolition must be instructed in the demolition plan so they may conduct their work in a safe manner.
- Any chute opening into which debris is dumped must be protected by standard guardrail system 42' above the floor or other surface on which personnel stand to dump the material; any space between the chute and edge of the opening in the floors through which it passes shall be covered.
- All floor and roof openings into which a person can accidentally walk or fall through shall be guarded by a physical barrier or covered.
- Every hatch way and chute floor opening shall be guarded by a hinged floor-opening cover. The opening shall be barricaded with railing so as to leave only one exposed side, the exposed side shall be provided either with a swinging gate or so offset that a person cannot walk into the opening.

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