Automobile Worker Asphyxiated By Metal Plates

INCIDENT

The tragedy unfolded on the morning of Tuesday, October 7th, 2014. Incident reports said that "Dunnivant was working in the metal stamping section of the plant when some stacked metal framework stamping plates shifted, slid and fell on Dunnivant."

It took two hours for crane to arrive and pull the heavy metal plates off of him. Troup Country Coroner Jeffrey Cook found that Dunnivant died of asphyxiation. The Coroner diagnosed his death to compression asphyxia due to the weight that was on him.

NEED TO KNOW

Since 2009, John Edd Dunnivant worked at the KIA Motors West Point, Georgia. Where he toiled in the manufacture of Sorenta and Santa Fe sport utility vehicles and sedans. But on October 7 / 2014, would be his last day.

BUSINESS / REGULATIONS

An Osha investigation was conducted. (B.L.S) data shows that 312 workers died in the overall manufactory industry in 2013.

Dunnivant's death was the first inside the Kia plant since it began operations in 2009, but it is not the first fatality linked to the operations of the 2,200-acre, $1 billion facility, which now employs more than 3,000 people.

- Ollie Tate, a construction worker for subcontractor Superior Rigging & Erecting Co., was killed in January 2008, when a beam fell on his head while the Kia plant was under construction. OSHA found three serious health and safety violations and fined Superior Rigging $13,200 for failure to properly secure steel beams.
- Teresa Pickard worked on the welding line at Sewon America, a LaGrange, Georgia plant that makes chassis, body and trim parts for the West Point Kia plant. She died of an on-the-job heart attack in May 2013 after reports of excessive heat in the facility.

Sadly, the family of the deceased always feel the agonizing feeling of loss of loved ones. The swath of Mr. Dunnivant's reach was extensive leaving behind a wife, a daughter, two stepchildren and twelve grandchildren.

STATISTICS

Most workplace “accidents” are not accidents but caused through and by human error and lack of action.

Mr. Dunnivant’s “accident” could have had been prevented with correct workplace practices and policies. Mr. Dunnivant was “crashed” to death. In 2018, a worker was crushed to death resulting from a largest proposed monetary penalty of 2.6 million (USD).

Despite these headline fines, the repercussions for employers putting workers in harm’s way remain small under the 1970 Occupational Safety and Health Act. The average federal fine for a serious workplace safety violation was $2,402 in fiscal year 2016, according to the most recent report by the AFL-CIO. And the median penalty for killing a worker was $6,500.

According to the most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics data, manufacturing plants reported approximately 2,000 accidents that led to workers suffering crushed fingers or hands, or had a limb amputated in machine-related accidents. The rate of amputations in manufacturing was more than twice as much (1.7 per 10,000 full-time employees) as that of all private industry (0.7).

PREVENTION

These deaths, like most workplace fatalities, are preventable. Steel beams, plates and other heavy equipment can be secured to prevent shifting, falling and other events that can endanger the lives of workers.

Prevention in these situations include:

- Proper cooling
- Adequate ventilation
- Rest breaks
- Regular access to fresh water to reduce the risk of heat exposure

Administration Issues:

Employees are safer on the job when they have a voice to advocate for improvements in their own working conditions. Studies have demonstrably showed that for example in the mining industry fatalities and traumatic injuries decreased with unionization.

In the West Point plant where Mr. Dunnivant worked and its Sewon supplier are non-union facilities. Prospective workers sued KIA in 2011, says applicants with union backgrounds had been systematically rejected for employment at the plant.

Training:

Studies have also shown that fatalities and injuries are reduced when employees are properly trained for the job they are paid to do. That includes the proviso that they can identify and neutralize hazards before someone gets killed or injured.