New York Ironworker Crushed to Death

The victim had been working 11 years at the company. He was 43, and worked as a foreman. He was helping disassemble a temporary support used to hold up the new pieces of a river bridge. This involved detaching 8,000-pound “pile caps” welded to the 77-foot bridge girders above and mounted atop pilings in the riverbed. The workers were briefed on safety, personal protective equipment and the specific hazards of the jobsite.

The caps were supposed to be attached to the girder above with two 5,000-pound chains and four welds. But the cap the victim was working on was secured with only two welds and a single 12,000-pound chain.

The victim was standing on the cap, preparing to rig up to a crane, when the cap broke loose from the beam above. It swung on the single safety chain, crushing the worker against another beam. He fell into the river, landing on the cap.

Paramedics were called immediately and a co-worker performed CPR, but the victim was pronounced dead at the scene.

- *The caps had originally been held on with two bolts and two welds. Later, the project engineer changed that requirement to four welds, with no bolts. But the changes were not properly communicated ; two welds were not enough. When major safety-related changes occur on the site, brief and retrain everyone as necessary.*
- *Despite an OSHA requirement to wear fall protection at heights over six feet, the victim wasn’t wearing any. PPE can never be ignored or skipped safely.*

Source: New York Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program, Case Report 05NY013