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Safety Alert

Fatality at Dayton, Ohio Airport, Pinnacle Airlines Baggage Handler Lift Falls on Grounds Crew Worker

On May 17, 2007 at approximately 7:10 a.m. Catrina Coffman, an employee of Pinnacle Airlines, in Dayton, Ohio and a USW member of local 736 received multiple injuries resulting from a falling containment car of a Vertical Reciprocating Conveyor (VRC), generally mistaken as an elevator, that led to her death.

Preliminary results of an investigation by the USW indicates the following:

Lessons Learned

- Vertical Reciprocating Conveyors (VRC) are not regulated by state elevator standards and therefore do not fall under the jurisdiction of state elevator inspectors. However, VRC's do have an American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) standard that requires certain safety equipment and requirements. This standard is known as the ASME B20.1 2006.
- There is no OSHA or ANSI standard for this piece of equipment and it is generally thought that there is no standard at all for this equipment. What we discovered during this fatality investigation is that all 19 of the VRC's located at the Dayton Airport that have been installed the previous two years are deficient of the requirements identified in the ASME B20 standard.
- The VRC that fell onto Catrina subsequently killing her was deficient of requirements of B20 that would have prevented the accident. Even though the ASME standard is not a required legal standard, if the company does not follow the standard they are placing their employees at risk of injuries and even death. The OSH-Act requires that the employer shall furnish to each of his employees employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees.
- Through our investigation we have discovered most all of these devices are out of compliance throughout the country. In addition to being used extensively in airports as conveyors of baggage, they are also being used as freight elevators in many of our industrial settings.

Recommendations

- All safety personnel, union and management, alike become familiar with the ASME B20 standard and cease using this piece of equipment until such time that it complies with all the requirements cited in the standard.

ASME B20.1

