Crane Drops Metal Plate on Saw Operator



A saw operator died when struck by a 710-pound (322-kilogram) aluminum plate that fell while suspended by an overhead crane.

In a metal-cutting shop, the victim had lifted the plate off a pallet by using a crane with vacuum-operated suction cups attached to the hook. For an unknown reason, he then shut off power to the crane and reached under the suspended plate. He may not have known that the suction cups were wired to the crane controls, so the vacuum shut off when the crane shut off. When the suction cups lost vacuum, the plate fell, striking the victim. He died immediately from massive blunt force injury.

An inspection revealed cracks and a cut in the suction cups, and other defects in the crane and hoses. A test showed the suction cups could hold a load for only 13 seconds after loss of power.

This fatality is a reminder to never stand or place any body part underneath loads being hoisted by a crane. Also, an overhead crane's power source should be separate from other power sources needed for attached lifting devices. Machinery should be properly configured, inspected and maintained.