Welder Falls 19 Storeys



A welder with 20 years’ experience as an iron worker died after he and his metal cage fell from a high-rise building where he and a co-worker were welding tube girts. Each welder was supported in separate metal cages suspended by a steel cable. Each had a portable welding rig on other floors of the building. The victim had his welding lead coming to his work area from above, while his co-worker had his lead coming from below.

The high-amperage cable above the victim’s cage was in poor condition, with a damaged and exposed area where the insulation was torn off. The wind made this bare wire come into direct contact with the steel support cable, and in a shower of sparks the welding lead arced to the steel cable, melting both of them in two, sending the cage and the welder to the ground 19 storeys below.

The man inside the cage was wearing a fall protective body harness, rope lanyard and nylon lifeline attached to a point above his work position. However, when the cage fell, it snagged and broke his lanyard, which was in poor condition. His lanyard was attached to the left D-ring of his belt harness, not to the proper attachment point in the midline of his back. He was also not using the leg straps of his body harness, but they were folded upon themselves and taped together.

Investigators recommended:

- Welding leads should always come from below suspended platforms or cages – never from above.
- Welders must inspect welding leads prior to and during work for signs of damage and/or exposed wire.
- Workers should ensure that fall protective gear is in acceptable condition and worn properly.