

Fatal Alert

On February 2, 2011, an employee working as a “derrick man” for an Oil & Gas Drilling company was severely injured when he fell from the oil rig derrick. Prior to the accident the derrick man had climbed the derrick ladder to the tubing boards using the ladder climbing assist equipment/counter weight system and was not using the available required self-retracting safety line. Once the crew finished tripping out of the hole, the derrick man started to climb down the derrick from the boards using the ladder climbing assist equipment. Since he did not use the self-retracting safety line to go up the ladder it was not available for him to use when he came down the ladder, as it was still attached at the bottom of the ladder.

While climbing down the ladder in the approximate area of the gooseneck, the pulley used with the ladder climbing assist system failed. The derrick man fell approximately 65’ (65 feet) landing on top of the dog house. Members of the rig crew did not observe the derrick man ascend or descend the derrick ladder.

The rig crew immediately administered first aid and kept the derrick man conscious and warm with blankets until emergency services arrived. The derrick man was flown by life flight to the Wyoming Medical Center in Casper, Wyoming. He expired on February 15, 2011.

Significant Factors:

- The temperature was -19° with a wind speed between 10-15 mph.
- Adequate inspections and preventative maintenance were not performed on the McKissick Hay Fork Pulley with swivel eye pulley [MHFP/HF-2] associated with the ladder climbing assist system.
- At the time of the accident a 1/2” (one half inch) wire rope was being used on the pulley instead of the 1 ¼” (one and one quarter inch) manila rope as recommended by manufacture.
- The McKissick Hay Fork Pulley with swivel eye [MHFP/HF-2], used with a ladder assist system, failed while being used by the derrick man.
- A Self-Retracting-Lifeline [SRL] affixed on the mast of the drill rig and designed to be used while climbing the ladder was available for use, but was not used by derrick man at the time of the accident.

Recommendations:

- Brief all employees on the facts and circumstances of this fatal mishap.
- Make certain the components of any ladder assist system are being properly maintained per manufactures recommendations.
- Ensure that the ladder climbing assist system is designed/rigged by a qualified person.
- Select a designated person to conduct frequent regular block inspection and maintenance.
- Ensure pre-tour safety meetings are held to discuss work to be performed (tripping the hole) and ensure all personal protective equipment (harness, lanyard, fall protection, etc.) is used.
- Ensure any person climbing the derrick ladder has proper fall protection at all times.