

## **Fatal Alert**

**April 14, 2008**

On April 14, 2008, a tower crew (consisting of four employees) was dispatched to a cellular communications transmitting tower to realign a communication dish. While in route to the tower the crew discussed the procedures to align the dish and attach additional communication cable clips to the existing cable on the tower. Two employees were assigned to align the dish and one employee was assigned to attach the cable clips. Radio communications were to be used during the procedures. The procedure, as defined were when the employees assigned to realign the communication dish reached the correct elevation, they would use radio communication to contact the foreman before proceeding with adjustments. The erected guy tower was estimated to be 160 feet with the communication dish located at 120 feet.

Arriving on site the tower foreman met with the company's communication technician. In preparation to climb the tower, two employees donned their personal fall protection and the fourth employee was working in the job trailer preparing the clips to be installed. The foreman and the company technician entered the communication building to monitor the signal as the dish was being re-aligned. The first employee to ascended the tower to realign the communication dish, climbed the tower without a ladder safety climbing device. Either while climbing the ladder or prior to attaching his fall protection lanyard to a section of the tower once he reached the dish location on the tower he fell from the tower. The weather conditions were clear, sunny, dry and windy.

### **Significant Factors**

- Employees had minimal experience in the Telecommunications industry (tower climbing).
- No formal Hazard recognition training had been provided to the fatally injured employee.
- A fall arrest system was not used while climbing the ladder on the communication tower.
- Although available for use a rope/cable grab system designed to provide fall protection while climbing the tower ladder was not used with the ladder climbing cable designed to be used with a rope/cable grab, no malfunctions were noted.

### **Recommendations:**

- Brief all employees on the facts and circumstances of this fatal mishap.
- Ensure employees are adequately trained to recognize the hazards associated with the task, to include 1910 General Industry Standard Subpart R for Telecommunications prior to allowing them to climb towers.
- Ensure a Job Safety Analysis (JSA) is completed prior to performing the task, so all employees involved have the knowledge to perform the task safely.
- Ensure all employees use the required/necessary fall protection equipment while exposed to fall hazards.
- Ensure management is involved in ensuring on site safety is a priority.