



HEALTH, SAFETY,
& ENVIRONMENTAL



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Final Report – Rope Access Worker Cut his Primary Line

During nighttime offshore demolition operations, a Rope Access Technician performing cutting activities with a battery-operated reciprocating saw (Sawzall) inadvertently cut his primary suspension rope. The worker fell approximately two feet before being arrested by his secondary rope system. No injuries were sustained; however, the incident had significant potential for serious injury or fatality.

Root Cause Analysis

The investigation identified three primary contributing factors:

Management / Supervisory Oversight

- Supervisors responsible for monitoring the suspended worker became distracted by other tasks and failed to recognize the developing hazard involving the worker's ropes.

Worker Positioning and Situational Awareness

- The worker's body and rope positioning allowed the suspension rope to enter the cutting zone of the saw.
- Continuous management of body position during task execution contributed to a loss of awareness of rope location.

Task Experience and Work Pressure

- Although the technician had approximately nine months of rope access experience, he had not previously performed this specific task.
- Schedule pressure and focus on production may have contributed to multitasking and reduced attention to critical safety controls.

Corrective Actions

- Supervisors assigned to monitor suspended workers shall remain dedicated to that responsibility and avoid simultaneous task assignments.
- Job planning and equipment setup must be completed before workers enter positions requiring continuous supervision.
- Body and rope positioning requirements shall be documented in safety paperwork, reviewed during pre-job discussions, and visually verified by supervisors before work begins.

Lessons Learned

- Supervisors must maintain focus on workers exposed to high-risk activities and not allow competing priorities to distract them from critical oversight responsibilities.
- Rope Access personnel must continuously manage body and rope positioning to prevent line-of-fire and tool-contact hazards.
- Ropes must be kept clear of cutting, grinding, hot work, and other damaging activities. Use rope protection, softeners, or alternate barriers where feasible to prevent contact with tools or abrasive surfaces.

Key Takeaway: This event demonstrates the importance of maintaining rope awareness, dedicated supervision, and effective pre-job planning. The secondary rope system functioned as intended; however, reliance on backup systems should never replace hazard recognition and prevention.

Proper use of the **GIS LIFE Processes** can help to create a **FAIL-SAFE** Work Environment.

SAFETY ALERT

