

SAFETY ALERT

Shared Learning's

INCIDENT TITLE:

Senior Vertical Horizontz height instructor s Incident

TIME AND DATE OF INCIDENT:

5th March 2014 1530 HRS

INCIDENT DETAIL :

Vertical Horizontz NZ Ltd were instigated by Industrial Site Services Ltd to carry out Global Wind Organisation height training at the ISS premises. ISS erected a ten metre high temporary scaffolding tower in order to simulate the height of a wind turbine (see Image below) to make the training as realistic as possible. As the day progressed, the number of trainees reduced. At approximately 1500hrs, an ISS employee was the only trainee left to descend everyone else was observing from the ground. The VHG senior instructor ensured that the trainee rigging was safe and he proceeded to complete his descent, leaving the senior instructor alone at the top of the tower. According to a witness

He changed the rigging of the safety rope.

Two witnesses observed the senior instructor descend as far as the top of the container, where he completed *"an abseil bounce off the scaffold at approximately the height of the bottom platform"* (2.5 metres from the ground), *"he appeared to come down straight, without bouncing prior to this – it all happened very fast"*. At this point the trainees all heard the 'thud' of the instructor hitting the ground. The instructor was found on the ground with the rope on top of him. A senior ISS manager asked what happened and the VHG instructor replied 'shit that hurt – I ran out of rope. He was then taken to hospital for assessment and x rays.

INITIAL RESPONSE AND INVESTIGATION OUTCOMES :

VHG carried out their own investigation which resulted in the dismal of the senior instructor.

Please see below extracts taken out of the investigation summary; It is an easy conclusion that given all of the events detailed within this investigative report, that by in large the resulting incident was a result of human error and negligence on behalf of the instructor. Caution must be taken in 'not throwing the baby out of the bath' just because of the gross negligence or violation of one person in an organisation. All VHNZ trainers are required to adhere to VHNZ policies and procedures surrounding the training that they deliver. VHNZ policy states that all training must be carried out in line with industry best practices, legislative requirements and in line with company policy. In this instance, all of the above mentioned benchmarks were flouted. As a member of IRAANZ and a registered rope access technician the instructor is required to "abide by industry standards". IRAANZ members are also required to "adhere to rigorous safety standards". In this instance, industry standards and IRAANZ requirements were not adhered to.

LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INCIDENT:

The complacency and blatant disregard by the senior instructor to not follow VHNZ policy and procedures but industry best practice, has however allowed VHNZ to learn from this event. As such, actions have been taken by VHNZ to further enhance their stance on Health and Safety.

The following contributing factors were identified in the investigation;

- Did not follow best practice
- No Safety back up line was used
- Exhibitionist Showing off
- The safe means of egress was not used(Stairs)
- Complacency

This is a reminder to us all that safety is everyone's responsibility. Even in the most senior working at height instructors can make a mistake and it is up to everyone to empower to stop an unsafe practice.

Please see an extract from the senior instructor's interview. *"I dropped everything to the ground except the last rope and set up my normal retrievable rope system, using a single karabiner Italian hitch" I did not complete my buddy check and did not notice one rope was shorter than the other" – "It was me who let myself down" "it was just an accident; I didn't check my rope lengths!" I have done it a thousand times and I was aware of the risk but never thought it would come to this, we should not teach the Italian hitch".*

PHOTO:



The Corporate Safety and Health Team are currently working on systems to support the above learnings. If interested in viewing the full investigation report for this incident, it can be found in:

By Contacting the Wind Safety Specialist



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