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INCIDENT ALERT

A group of three ironworker apprentices had been tasked with moving a steel beam. The beam had been placed on two low rolling dollies, each with four wheels. The beam was approximately 26 feet long and weighed around 500 pounds. Three additional steel plates weighing an aggregate of 250 pounds had been placed on the top of the beam. The floor surface they were moving across was rough and uneven. The group decided to position one person at each end of the beam and one in the center in order to move it across the floor. They also decided to place spud wrenches (wrenches with pointed handles) into holes in the dollies to act as handles. As they were moving across the floor one of the dolly wheels caught in a groove. The beam tipped and one worker attempted to catch it to keep it from falling over. The beam fell and trapped his arm between it and the floor, breaking his wrist. Workers in the area rushed to his aid and lifted the beam from his arm. An ambulance was called and he was transported to a nearby hospital where he was treated and released to return to restricted duty.

LESSONS LEARNED

The incident investigation identified several issues. First, a task plan had been developed, but the possibility of the beam tipping and the uneven floor had not been addressed. Second, the beam was not strapped to the dollies. Third, the additional metal plates should not have been placed on top of the beam unsecured. Fourth, the workers were bent over pushing and pulling on the carts, and awkward position. Fifth, the apprentices were not being observed by their journeyman, who may have been able to prevent them from taking the risk of moving the beam in this manner. Changes were immediately implemented requiring loads be strapped down, beams be laid on their side to provide more stability, tag lines are to be secured to the dollies to allow workers to stand further from the load when it is being moved, and journeymen were made available to supervise apprentices work.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Talk with your contractor about how material handling is addressed in the task planning process. Ask about their policies toward apprentices working by themselves.

2. Watch for situations that could result in a similar injury. Are workers using the proper material handling devices for transporting materials? Are materials secured when they are being moved? Is it necessary for workers to crouch in order to move materials or are they using methods that allow them to stand and keep their balance? Are apprentices properly supervised? Have their task plans adequately addressed material handling and site conditions?

3. Share this Incident Alert with your contractor and ask them to share it with their workers.

Distribution:
All CPO Staff