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INCIDENT ALERT

An ironworker apprentice was tasked with moving bundles of reinforcing steel. The steel was bundled in 15 and 20 foot long sections. A tower crane was being used to lift the material. Two of the bundles, one 15 feet long and one 20 feet long, had been rigged together with the 20 foot long section on top of the 15 foot section. The material was being lowered by the crane when the worker notices some dunnage the steel was to land on was spaced too far apart. He reached under the load as it was coming down to readjust the dunnage, and his left ring finger got pinched between the steel and the dunnage. He was able to quickly pull his hand away, and suffered a broken finger tip.

The worker did not immediately report the injury, but instead completed his shift. He went to his personal doctor for treatment, and the injury was reported at a later date.

LESSONS LEARNED

First and foremost, it is important for anyone working with a crane to understand the danger of placing any body part below a suspended load, particularly when the load is being lowered. The worker saw a need to adjust the dunnage. A better practice would have been to stop the load, swing it clear of the dunnage, adjust it, then proceed to land the load. Second, it had been a practice on the project to use varying methods to signal the crane, and not the exclusive duty of the bellman to do so. After the incident a training and communication session was held with all workers who will be moving materials with the crane to clarify the procedures. Also, in this instance, the bellman had not kept his eyes on the load until it was completely landed. It is normally the responsibility of a bellman to retain control of the load at all times it is in the air. The situation was immediately corrected. Furthermore, each contractor with the need to use the crane has submitted a list of qualified people that are the only people allowed to signal for the crane.

Three other issues were also identified. First, a task plan for the specific task had not been developed. Task planning for the lift could have identified the need to properly space the dunnage and have eliminated the perceived urgent need to correct the spacing. Secondly, the apprentice had been assigned to work under the immediate direction of the foreman. Had he been supervised more closely the foreman may have been able to see the potential for the injury and have stopped the load. Third, it is important that all injuries be reported and promptly treated.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Talk with your contractor about their policies and procedures regarding crane use and the qualifications of riggers and bellmen. Ask how apprentices are supervised, and how task planning is used in relation to craning activities.

2. Watch for similar activities when walking through your projects. Are craning activities taking place? Are workers trained? Are they potentially putting themselves at risk? Have the workers completed a task plan, and is the plan appropriate for the task being performed?

3. Share and discuss this incident alert widely.

Distribution:
All CPO Staff