

Poor planning

Dear Sir,

I am writing in response to your request for additional information in Block 3 of your accident report form. I put "poor planning" as the cause of my accident. You asked for a fuller explanation and I trust the following details will be sufficient:

I am a bricklayer by trade. On the day of the accident, I was working alone on the roof of a new six story building. When I completed my work, I found that I had some bricks left over which, when weighed later were found to be slightly in excess of 500 lbs. Rather than carry the bricks down by hand, I decided to lower them in a barrel by using a pulley, which was attached to the side of the building on the sixth floor.

Securing the rope at ground level, I went up to the roof, swung the barrel out and loaded the bricks into it. Then I went down and untied the rope, holding it tightly to ensure a slow descent of the bricks.

You will note in Block 11 of the accident report form that I weigh 135 lbs. Due to my surprise at being jerked off the ground so suddenly, I lost my presence of mind and forgot to let go of the rope. Needless to say, I proceeded at a rapid rate up the side of the building.

In the vicinity of the third floor, I met the barrel, which was now proceeding downward at an equally impressive speed. This explained the fractured skull, minor abrasions and the broken collar bone, as listed in section 3 of the accident report form. Slowed only slightly, I continued my rapid ascent, not stopping until the fingers of my right hand were two knuckles deep into the pulley.

Fortunately by this time I had regained my presence of mind and was able to hold tightly to the rope, in spite of beginning to experience pain. At approximately the same time, however, the barrel of bricks hit the ground and the bottom fell out of the barrel. Now devoid of the weight of the bricks (the barrel weighed approximately 50 lbs) I refer you again to my weight.

As you can imagine, I began a rapid descent, down the side of the building. In the vicinity of the third floor, I met the barrel coming up. This accounts for the two fractured ankles, broken tooth and several lacerations of my legs and lower body.

Here my luck began to change slightly. The encounter with the barrel seemed to slow me enough to lessen my injuries when I fell into the bricks and fortunately only three vertebrae were cracked.

I am sorry to report, however, as I lay there on the pile of bricks, in pain unable to move, I again lost my composure and presence of mind and let go of the rope and I lay there watching the empty barrel begin its journey back down onto me. This explains the two broken legs.

I hope this answers your inquiry. Kevin Roben

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This is a bricklayer's accident report, which was printed in the newsletter of the Victoria Crane Association, earlier this year.

Good afternoon,

Revised business rates are due to come into effect in the UK this month (April) following the revaluation carried out in 2008. This will lead to significant cost increases for many small businesses.

As a result, there appears to be an increasing number of unscrupulous companies offering to appeal against revised rates on behalf of small firms. Some of these companies are charging large sums of money but deliver very few successful appeals.

These cowboys spring up and start cold calling businesses offering to get them big reductions on their rates. However, in reality, it's often the case that any savings they make are minimal and are quickly dwarfed by the fees they charge.

LeaseholdersUnited's list of 150 recommended rating surveyors is available to view for free on its website. The surveyors achieve a reduction in business rates for at least one in three clients - this is the average success rate across the industry.

Many thanks,

Chris Gorham
Forum of Private Business

Hi Leigh,

I recently came across a contractor replacing guttering and soffits on a two storey house close to where I live. They were using three ladders and some planks placed upon brackets hooked onto the ladders, the ladders were not properly set and there were no guardrails, even though they were working at a height of over five metres.

I approached job and personally spoke to the two lads working and made them aware of the obvious danger they were putting themselves in. The reply was unbelievable. "We always do it like this and anyway a guardrail gives you a false sense of security". One of the lads declared proudly that he had done a rope access course so knew all about safety.

I pointed out that they would not get a penny (that's if they survived a fall) but also their company would be shutdown. The reply to this was "Well they aren't going to shut down Nxxxxxxx (edited) are they? - I would guess from that they are subcontracting to them? - So when you think you have seen and heard it all before!

Regards

James O'Grady

Letters to the editor:

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