

# SAFETY ALERT – FATALITY: Employee Falls From Scaffold

No. 78

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**FROM:** Al Shetler, Director – Safety Policy and Administration  
**TO:** All Division Managers, Project Managers, Field Supervision, Region/Division/Project Safety Staff  
**cc:** SMT

**PLEASE POST AT ALL PROJECTS. SUPERVISORS TO REVIEW WITH RELEVANT EMPLOYEES AT AN UPCOMING SAFETY MEETING IF APPLICABLE.**

## What Happened?

On Thursday, December 18, 2008 at approximately 11:00 am at the Shell refinery at Deer Park, Texas, a scaffold helper and valued Brand employee fell about 100 feet from an incomplete scaffold deck and suffered fatal injuries.

A Brand scaffold crew was erecting a scaffold needed to repair insulation damage on a crude column. The scaffold was about 110 feet high at the time of this incident and included a stair tower to provide access to the scaffold encircling the column. The crew was working on the upper levels of the scaffold and stair tower. During a break, the crew was getting drinks from a water cooler on a scaffold platform. The employee had been working two levels below and came up to get a drink. For reasons unknown, she decided to climb up the stair tower to an incomplete landing where two coolers had been delivered that morning. Shortly after, she fell from the platform, apparently from where an opening at the edge of the deck had been created (roughly 48"x18" opening) as a trash chute for the insulation removal job. She fell to the ground suffering fatal injuries, although the actual cause of death has yet to be obtained from the Medical Examiner.

## Why Did it Happen?

The actual cause of the fall remains unknown. However, based on witness reports and the physical evidence available, it is apparent that the employee was not tied off as required by Brand's fall protection policy.

## Brand's Response

- Brand personnel notified all required customer, internal and external agency authorities and began an immediate, in-depth investigation. Additionally, Brand has cooperated fully with Shell and with OSHA in their respective investigations. These investigations have not been concluded.
- Immediately following the incident, all Brand projects held a Safety Stand-Down to inform all employees of the incident and to reinforce that they must follow all regulatory, company, and customer safety requirements, with emphasis on our fall protection policies, the need to always be aware of your surroundings, and to remain focused on the task at hand.
- Brand initiated "event management" activities including support for the family and fellow workers such as grief counselling for those in need. As well, a memorial fund was set up in the employee's name to gather immediate financial support for the family.

## Additional Findings and Action

- Brand has proactive safety policies, procedures, training, and audits in place designed to prevent this type of incident from taking place. Action plans were established in conjunction with Shell to enhance site safety effectiveness.

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### Additional Findings and Action

- It was determined from the evidence available that the employee had been wearing all required PPE. There were anchor points available to the employee in the vicinity where she allegedly fell to safely tie-off her fall arrest equipment. She was fully trained and knowledgeable in fall protection safety and practice. Safety meetings had been held (even that morning) to emphasize the importance of following tie-off policy.
- Brand's fall protection policies were examined and found to meet or exceed industry standards. Nonetheless, Brand is in the process of further reinforcing existing fall protection rules on Shell/Motiva sites and further strengthening disciplinary measures to be taken for: (a) Scaffold workers who are found not complying with our tie-off policy, (b) the immediate supervisor and fellow crew members of workers who violate Brand's tie-off rules.

#### Site-Specific Action:

- Brought in Brand site management from another Shell project to evaluate practices and culture and to identify opportunities for improvement.
- Strengthened adherence to Brand's discipline procedures on site for violation of fall protection and other hazard-related policies.
- Provided additional safety training/reinforcement to site supervision using Brand's "Path to Zero" course and "Situational Leadership" course.
- Reinforced Brand's behavior based safety program on site.
- Reinforced job safety planning process on site through additional mandatory review/participation by every member of the crew.
- Increased frequency and quality of management site safety inspections/audits by Corporate/Regional/Divisional/Supervisory staff.

For questions or additional information, please contact:

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