



COLLAPSE

The scene after a tower crane deatched and plummeted 19 floors in New York

Deaths highlight lack of crane safety regulation

The appalling safety standards within the US construction industry have been highlighted after a number of crane-related deaths recently in New York, Miami and Las Vegas.

In New York, two tower crane accidents on March 15 and May 30 killed nine people.

The cause of the March tragedy, in which seven people died and 24 were injured when the crane plummeted 19 floors, has so far been blamed on the failure of a \$50 nylon strap.

However, the city's chief crane inspector was arrested in May on bribery charges, claiming he gave away copies of the city licensing test and answers so some crane company employees would pass.

Also in March, two construction workers in Florida were killed when a crane plummeted 30 storeys on to an apartments project, damaging the home used in the movie "There's Something about Mary".

But the problem is not limited to these incidents with 2006 statistics showing 72 workers dying in crane-related accidents across the US.

Many states have no count of their cranes, nor do they mandate training for workers who

run the equipment, or officials who certify crane operators.

New York has only four inspectors on the payroll to inspect more than 200 cranes, 26 of them large tower cranes.

The crane standards of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration were last updated in 1971. They require cranes to be inspected once a year. But most of the inspections never happen.

In states that go by only OSHA standards, annual crane inspections are largely a matter of self-policing.

Federal law requires that inspection records be kept, but not submitted.

In its latest initiative, New York City announced that all individual parts of a tower crane must be inspected by an independent third party before the crane is assembled.

The company inspecting the part can't have any connection to the engineers that are devising the operational plan for the crane. California, which is widely believed to have the toughest crane regulations in the country, requires that all tower cranes undergo an annual complete mechanic inspection by an independent firm.

Associated Press/New York Times

Jobs lost as Celtic Tiger loses its roar

Ireland is facing up to 10,000 job losses in the construction sector.

Construction employment has dropped by 2.5 per cent, or 7000 jobs, in the past year.

But industry sources say the vast majority of firms held on to staff in 2007 in anticipation of a pick-up in demand in 2008 that has yet to materialise.

Faced with zero demand for new houses, tightening bank credit and increased interest rates, many within the sector are privately predicting a major shedding of staff.

There are now 275,000 people working in construction compared with 282,000 a year ago, but levels of business suggest a fall to about 250,000 would be more in tune with market conditions.

Irish Independent

Korean unionists need your support

Building and Wood Workers International (BWI) is asking you to show your support for the Pohang Construction Plant Workers Union, KFCITU in South Korea.

POSCO, a major steel production company in the country, launched a systematic campaign to break the union after its strike in 2006.

We cannot tolerate that POSCO has used its political and economic clout in Pohang, where the company controls at least 70 per cent of the economy, to implement a deliberate and strategic plan to break the union through various tactics. ACT NOW!

Voice your concern by joining the email protest at: <http://www.bwint.org/default.asp?Index=1788&Language=EN>

Campaign continues for jailed Iranian unionist

The international union movement and Amnesty International are calling on the world not to forget jailed Iranian trade union-

ist Mansour Osanloo.

Their call comes a little more than a year after he was kidnapped off a bus in Tehran on 10 July in an arrest the authorities initially denied had even taken place.

Reports say he was again held on charges of threatening national security over the bus workers' strike of 2005. However he is already serving time on those charges.

The International Transport Workers Federation, International Trade Union Confederate and Amnesty International have also called on the Iranian government to recognise Osanloo's union, the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company.

Workers urged to join ban against Mugabe

Workers from around the world have been urged to refuse to handle goods destined for Zimbabwe, as part of a policy of solidarity put forward by South Africa's trade union federation, COSATU.

The ban is supported by COSATU as well as the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and the Swaziland Federation of Labour.

COSATU's Patrick Craven called for a "grassroots movement of solidarity" and urged workers worldwide to refuse to handle goods destined for Zimbabwe, as part of a campaign to force disgraced President Robert Mugabe to relinquish power.

Craven said the action is merely an attempt to "accelerate progress towards democratic change" and added that COSATU "has no interest in bringing the people of Zimbabwe into more abject poverty than they already find themselves in".

Craven said the plan for a worldwide workers' boycott will be approved at this month's solidarity conference in Johannesburg.