

A Hole Swallowed His Life



by William Lightfoot
Partner

A General Contractor (GC) shares responsibility for job safety with all subcontractors and workers. The GC has responsibility to correct all recognizable hazards. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issues safety rules. This is a true story about a life altering injury caused when a GC broke an OSHA rule.

In 2010, a General Contractor (GC) renovated a public school building. The GC hired a subcontractor to remove the roof of the building. The GC ordered workers to paint the word "hole" onto each plywood sheet that covered a hole in the roof. No one was told to secure the plywood covers.

An employee for the subcontractor noticed a piece of plywood at the spot

where the crane was to unload materials onto the roof. The plywood did not say "hole." The worker picked up the plywood. He took one step and then he fell through a hole in the roof.

Two law firms refused to represent the worker in a law suit against the GC. The firms said that the worker was partially at fault because he picked up the plywood without looking underneath it. One of the lawyers referred the injured worker to me, attorney William Lightfoot. The attorney had heard of my reputation for winning difficult cases and she had heard that I represent many workers injured on the job.

I obtained a copy of the investigation by OSHA; spoke with the OSHA investigator; obtained documents,

photos and he hired a private detective to record witness statements from co-workers.

Following an aggressive strategy to trial preparation, I took more than 15 depositions; hired 11 experts to testify to unsafe work practices, and to the nature and extent of damages, and he helped doctors draw medical illustrations to show the injuries. I filed a motion for summary judgment asking that the Judge find the GC was negligent as a matter of law.

One month before trial, the GC agreed to pay \$1,800,000 to the injured worker. None of this would have been necessary, if the GC had followed the OSHA rule to paint the word hole on every cover.



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