Inspection Basics Fatality File



Racking Collapse Kills Spotter After Damage Went Unchecked

A spotter working inside a large building materials retail store was fatally crushed when a section of pallet racking collapsed in a tile storage area. The victim, a warehouse employee whose name was not publicly released, was standing in a narrow aisle assisting a reach truck operator with a load of ceramic tile, mortar, and grout when the steel frame beside him suddenly buckled.

Investigators found that the racking system had visible damage—a bent 1×3 inch frame section between knee and waist height—which had been noticed and reported to a supervisor about 30 minutes before the collapse. Despite this, no steps were taken to block off the area or stop nearby forklift operations. A reach truck passed beside the compromised structure, and the added movement and load caused the weakened rack to give way. The employee was pinned under the falling materials and killed instantly.

This fatality illustrates the deadly consequences of ignoring early warning signs and failing to act on known hazards. A small visible defect, if unaddressed, can compromise an entire structure. Regular inspections, immediate hazard mitigation, and clear protocols for stopping work when damage is reported are essential to prevent preventable tragedies like this one.

Source: osha.gov