

## ARTICLE

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# Construction Deaths Take Toll



### **On behalf of Michael Epstein at The Epstein Law Firm, P.A.**

Construction is annually the most dangerous industry in the country, according to statistics gathered by the federal government. Last year's spate of crane-related construction deaths in New York City transformed impersonal statistics into very personal tragedies that shook the city.

In March, seven people died after a 200-foot-tall tower crane collapsed on the East Side. Investigators say the seven would be alive if the crane operation supervisor, known as the master rigger, had used the eight nylon slings called for by the manufacturer.

When the four slings that were used failed, a 12,000-pound collar on the tower plummeted, triggering the crane's collapse.

Of the seven dead, six were construction workers. The seventh victim was Odin Torres, 28, of Florida. She was in New York to celebrate St. Patrick's Day when the crane crashed into the four-story townhouse she was in.

Weeks later, a faulty weld in a crane on the Upper East Side gave way, causing the unloaded arm of the crane to circle and snap off, propelling the cab and arm onto an apartment building across the street. Two construction workers were killed in the incident.

Crane operator Donald Leo, 30, was three weeks away from going on a honeymoon in Greece. Instead, his fiancée delivered the eulogy at his Staten Island funeral.

Three months later, Anthony Esposito, 48, died after plunging 40 stories to his death while helping dismantle a crane. Investigators determined that a required safety railing was missing from the platform on which he stood.

Esposito was the father of three teenage children.

In the hours after that September incident, the New York City Council passed a variety of regulations meant to toughen safety standards for crane operations.

The federal government's Occupational Safety and Hazard Administration is currently considering updating its national regulations for crane operations. The current regulations were approved in 1971.

A report by the Center for Construction Research and Training found that between 1992 and 2006, there was an average of 42 crane-related worker deaths annually.

The study revealed that last year there were "a total of 97 construction crane incidents involving injuries and deaths. There were a total of 54 deaths and 100 injuries of construction workers in 88 incidents, and four deaths and 26 injuries of non-construction workers (15 bystanders and 11 rescue workers) in 15 incidents. These incidents involved 88 mobile cranes, 7 tower cranes and 2 other cranes."