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NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

REVIEW BOARD

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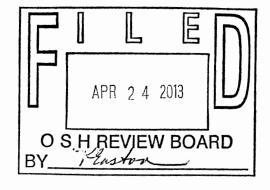
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER OF THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION, DIVISION OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY,

Complainant,

COOPER ROOFING AND SOLAR,

vs.

Respondent.



DECISION

This matter having come before the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND **HEALTH REVIEW BOARD** at a hearing commenced on the 13th day of March 2013, in furtherance of notice duly provided according to law, MR. DON SMITH, ESQ., counsel appearing on behalf of the Complainant, Chief Administrative Officer of the Occupational Safety and Administration, Division of Industrial Relations (OSHA); and MR. CRAIG MAROUIS, ESO. appearing on behalf of Respondent, COOPER ROOFING AND SOLAR; the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD finds as follows:

Jurisdiction in this matter has been conferred in accordance with Chapter 618 of the Nevada Revised Statutes.

The complaint filed by the OSHA sets forth allegations of violation of Nevada Revised Statutes as referenced in Exhibit "A", attached thereto.

Citation 1, Item 1, charges a violation of 29 CFR 1926.501(b)(10) as follows:

Citation 1, Item 1, 29 CFR 1926.501(b)(10): "Roofing work on Low-slope roofs." Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (b) of this section, each employee engaged in roofing activities on low-slope roofs, with unprotected sides and edges 6 feet (1.8 m) or more above lower levels shall be protected from falling by guardrail systems, safety net systems, personal fall arrest systems, or a combination of warning line system and guardrail system, warning line system and safety net system, or warning line system and personal fall arrest system, or warning line system and safety monitoring system. Or, on roofs 50-feet (15.25 m) or less in width (see Appendix A to subpart M of this part), the use of a safety monitoring system alone [i.e. without the warning line system] is permitted.

While performing roofing work on a residential construction jobsite located at 5614 Trilling Bird Drive, Las Vegas, NV 89135, an employee of Cooper Roofing and Solar was working more than 6 feet above the lower landing level and was not protected from falls. The employee was wearing a full body harness, but was not attached to a fall arrest system. The employee was exposed to a fall of at least 6-1/2 feet to the lower landing surface, which could have resulted in serious injury.

The violation was classified as "Serious". The proposed penalty for the alleged violation is in the amount of TWO THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED TWENTY DOLLARS (\$2,520.00).

Complainant and respondent stipulated to the admission of documentary evidence at complainant Exhibits 1 through 5 as compiled in its evidence packet and respondent Exhibits 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Complainant presented testimony and documentary evidence with regard to the alleged violation. Mr. Tristan Dressler, a certified safety and health officer (CSHO) testified as to his inspection and the citation issued to the respondent employer.

On October 24, 2012, Mr. Dressler conducted an inspection of respondent's worksite located on Trilling Bird Drive, in Las Vegas, Nevada. He observed an employee engaged in roofing work standing on the

southwest end of a second story roof building structure wearing a personal fall arrest harness but without any attachment to a lifeline. The employee appeared to be moving about the roof in an unsafe manner, walking from the top of the roof section down towards the lower edge of the roof. The CSHO obtained photographs of the observed employee exposed to hazardous fall conditions. Mr. Dressler then contacted Mr. Robert Cockhill, a superintendent for the controlling general contractor employer, Ryland Homes, and initiated an inspection. He was informed by Mr. Cockhill that the workers on the roof were employees of subcontractor Cooper Roofing and Solar, the respondent herein. The employees were performing roofing work on two model homes under construction. Mr. Cockhill contacted Mr. Napoleon Mendez, Safety Manager for the respondent employer, and requested his presence at the job site.

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CSHO Dressler conducted employee interviews and made reference to Exhibit 2, his narrative inspection report. He identified Exhibit 5 as photos 1 through 3 depicting the respondent employees he observed on the roof structure. Mr. Dressler identified Mr. Allen Ortega as the respondent employee in Exhibit 2, photo 1 without his safety harness attached to the lifeline. During the interview, Mr. Ortega responded to CSHO Dressler that he was not "tied off" because he was getting off the roof to get drink of water. When asked why he stayed on the roof and continued working after noticing the CSHO, no explanation was given. Mr. Ortega informed CSHO Dressler that "his foreman", Mr. Juan Garcia, was not on the roof that day but operating the fork lift at the ground level.

CSHO Dressler interviewed Mr. Juan Garcia who identified himself as the foreman on the site, but not responsible for safety. He informed

the CSHO that when the employees enter onto the roof they make their own decisions.

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CSHO Dressler reviewed the respondent written Roofing Fall Protection Program and confirmed it required a ". . . 100% tie-off policy."

During continued inspection, Mr. Dressler determined the distance between the roof on which employee Ortega was observed working to the scaffold below was greater than 6 feet and required fall hazard protection under OSHA standards. An access ladder attached to the scaffolding on the building site provided a method for determining distance by counting the number of ladder rungs and applying a nominal measurement of 12 inches for the span between each rung.

CSHO Dressler conducted a closing conference with Mr. Mike Pullen, General Manager for respondent, and Mr. Napoleon Mendez, the respondent Safety Manager. He determined the element of employer knowledge for the violative conduct of employee Ortega was satisfied because Mr. Juan Garcia was a supervisory employee working in close proximity to Mr. Ortega. Mr. Garcia identified himself to the CSHO as "the foreman". Mr. Ortega identified Mr. Juan Garcia as "his foreman". Mr. Garcia informed the CSHO that he was operating the forklift and not watching the employees because he was unable to see them on the roof from the ground level. However, Mr. Dressler testified that the employees on the roof were directing Mr. Garcia on where to place the roofing materials with the forklift and Mr. Garcia had to look at the area on the roof where the employees were standing to land the materials and avoid striking both the structure and the employees with the forklift as he set the load onto the roof.

Mr. Dressler testified he proposed a penalty and serious

classification, after considering the potential for a fall from the top of the roof edge where the employees were working, to the second level below. He testified that while the violation was serious he referenced a "lesser probability" rating and proposed appropriate penalty adjustments for size, good faith and history resulting in a 50% monetary reduction factor.

CSHO Dressler recommended issuance of Citation 1, Item 1, based upon his determination of applicability of the cited standard, 29 CFR 1926.501(b)(10) to the facts he observed, photographed, and employee statements taken at the job site. He testified the standard was applicable to the facts in evidence based upon the height of work and the hazard exposure to a potential fall from the work surface of employee Ortega to the level below. A lower severity rating was assessed based upon the type of injuries that might be sustained from a fall. He rated the probability factor at lesser based upon the conditions observed.

On cross-examination, Mr. Dressler testified he was informed Mr. Claudio Garcia was the area superintendent for respondent and had dispatched the crew to the particular job site. Mr. Juan Garcia was the job site foreman working directly with the employees at the subject job site. He determined the company maintained a compliant written safety program, and verified Mr. Ortega was trained in fall protection based upon the documentation provided, and his onsite interviews. He testified Mr. Juan Garcia told him he was the "foreman" and "running" the job. He testified Mr. Juan Garcia also informed him at the closing conference that Mr. Ortega was disciplined for failing to follow the company 100% tie off policy as confirmed in the documentation provided at respondent's Exhibits 1 and 2.

At the conclusion of complainant's case, respondent presented testimony and documentary evidence. Mr. Michael Pullen identified himself as the General Manager of the employer respondent. He testified the company had two area superintendents; on each side of the city, and every job was assigned a "lead guy" to interact with the area superintendents. He stated the superintendents are responsible for directing the crews in the field. Mr. Claudio Garcia was the area superintendent for the subject job. He identified Mr. Juan Garcia as the lead man on the job. He testified a lead man on a crew is not considered a supervisor by the company. Mr. Pullen described job description differences among the various crews working for respondent. Some crews are only material truck loaders. Other crews load the material onto the roof at the job site. A "dry-in" crew finishes the work. Each worksite has a "lead man" who the company does not regard as a supervisor because none have authority to hire, fire or make decisions. He testified the company has a 100% tie-off policy and that any person working above 6 foot must be tied off.

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On cross-examination Mr. Pullen testified the company safety manager has no authority to hire, fire or discipline, but can only recommend and carry out discipline. He has no ability to direct work, although he could stop someone if he sees an infraction.

Additional testimony and evidence were presented through Mr. Napoleon Mendez who identified himself as the company Safety Manager. He testified that he implemented the discipline imposed by the general manager on Mr. Ortega for failing to comply with the company 100% tie off policy. He retrained Mr. Ortega the day after the OSHA inspection in furtherance of the company disciplinary policy and signed the confirming documentation in evidence.

Respondent concluded his case and both counsel were directed to present closing argument.

Complainant asserted the required burden of proof was met to establish a violation of the cited standard by a preponderance of evidence. Mr. Ortega was clearly photographed working on the roof without an attached safety line which corroborated the observations and sworn testimony of CSHO Dressler. The protection thresholds and applicability of the standard as to the height of the potential fall at more than six (6) feet are unrefutted in the evidence. Employee Ortega was exposed to serious injury based upon the unrebutted testimony of Mr. Dressler. The appropriateness of the penalty was established by the CSHO testimony and Exhibit 2 in evidence. The penalty assessed was reasonable as adjusted for the appropriate credits to which the respondent was entitled under the OSHA enforcement manual.

Complainant counsel argued the defense of unpreventable employee misconduct must fail. While the evidence and testimony established there was an acceptable written safety program, it was not effectively enforced. Without effective enforcement and a supervisory employee on the site, an employee misconduct defense cannot be established. The evidence shows Mr. Juan Garcia was a foreman, and lead man, accordingly a supervisory employee of the respondent. Under OSHA law employer knowledge is established directly or constructively by imputation if an employer or supervisory employee knew or should have known, with the exercise of due diligence, of unsafe or violative employee conduct. Juan Garcia was identified by the general manager Pullen as the "lead guy". Mr. Ortega in his interview responses to the CSHO said Juan Garcia was "his foreman". Mr. Garcia told CSHO Dressler he was the "foreman and . . . running the job . . .". Supervisory personnel

presence on the site through Mr. Juan Garcia, with a view of employee Ortega's safety infraction establishes constructive employer knowledge of violative conduct by the respondent.

Respondent counsel tries to divorce authority and responsibility for safety enforcement by asserting company job title definitions of various superintendents, foreman and safety officers; but to do so would leave no responsibility for the company employee safety program. The respondent safety program appears to be merely "reactive and not a proactive plan as to enforcement . . .". Counsel asserts the respondent did not, as required under the recognized defense of unpreventable employee misconduct, meet its burden of proof to show that it took meaningful steps to discover violations or adequately enforce its safety plan as demonstrated by attempts to separate the roles of Mr. Garcia as a foreman, lead man, and supervisory employee.

Respondent submitted closing argument asserting the recognized defense of employee misconduct must be confirmed to excuse the employer of responsibility for Mr. Ortega's unpreventable failure to maintain a 100% tie-off. Counsel referenced Exhibits 1-4 to demonstrate an established safety program, effective enforcement of the safety plan, safety training for employees including Mr. Ortega, and the disciplinary action against Mr. Ortega for violation. Counsel further argued there is no requirement in the OSHA standards or regulations under occupational safety and health law to support a violation for a ". . . failure to supervise job safety . . .". He referenced cross-examination testimony of CSHO Dressler that there is no requirement for same. Counsel argued enforcement of the compliant safety plan and actual discipline were done and that's all a reasonable employer can do or is required to do to satisfy OSHA requirements. He argued there is no law

that says an employer needs someone to be there (on site) to enforce safety, but rather if a violation is found then the employer must effectively enforce disciplinary rules. All OSHA requirements were satisfied by the respondent, and there is nothing more that should reasonably be imposed upon any employer at a job site. Counsel asserted that employers cannot catch 100% of violative conduct, and respondent maintained a good safety plan and enforced violations. He concluded stating the case was clearly one of employee misconduct. The employer had no knowledge of the violative conduct. It cannot be imputed to the respondent simply because Mr. Juan Garcia, a lead man with limited responsibilities and no authority to hire or fire, was a supervisory employee and obligated to enforce safety.

The board reviewed the facts in evidence, and weighed the testimony provided by the witnesses of complainant and respondent. The board finds a preponderance of evidence to support violation of the cited fall protection standard at Citation 1, Item 1.

N.A.C. 618.788(1) provides:

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In all proceedings commenced by the filing of a notice of contest, the burden of proof rests with the Administrator.

All facts forming the basis of a complaint must be proved by a preponderance of the evidence. See Armor Elevator Co., 1 OSHC 1409, 1973-1974 OSHD ¶ 16,958 (1973).

To establish a prima facie case, the Secretary (Chief Administrative Officer) must prove 1) the cited standard applies; 2) the requirements of the standard were not met; 3) employees were exposed to or had access to the violative condition; 4) the through the employer knew exercise of or, reasonable diligence could have known of 5) violative condition; there is substantial probability that death or serious physical harm could result from the violative condition (in a violation case). See Corporation, 2 OSHC 1336, 1974-1975 OSHD ¶ 18,906 (1974); D.A. Collins Construction Co. Inc., v.

Secretary of Labor, 117 F.3d 691 (2nd Cir. 1997). (Emphasis added)

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A "serious" violation defined in NRS 618.625(2) provides in pertinent part:

> ". . . a serious violation exists in a place of employment if there is a substantial probability that death or serious physical harm could result from a condition which exists or from one or more practices, means, methods, operations or processes which have been adopted or are in use at that place of employment unless the employer did not and could not, with the exercise of reasonable diligence, know the presence of the violation." (Emphasis added)

The testimony and evidence establish the existence of violative conduct in contravention of the cited standard. Respondent presented no evidence to refute the facts of violation, but asserted the recognized defense of isolated, unpreventable employee misconduct.

Complainant's initial burden to prove the violation was met by the unrebutted sworn testimony of CSHO Dressler, the photographs in evidence at complainant Exhibit 5, photos 1-3, and the evidence at Exhibit 2.

The burden of proof to confirm a violation rests with OSHA under Nevada law (NAC 618.798(1)); but after establishing same, the burden shifts to the respondent to prove any recognized defenses. See Jensen Construction Co., 7 OSHC 1477, 1979 OSHD $\P23,664$ (1979). Accord, Marson Corp., 10 OHSHC 2128, 1980 OSHC 1045 \$\frac{9}{24,174}\$ (1980).

> The defense (unpreventable employee misconduct) has been stated in various ways, but it basically requires an employer to show that its employees were required to take protective measures that would comply with the standard and it enforced that **requirement.** E.g., Brock v. L.E. Myers Co., 818 F.2d 1270, 13 OSH Cases 1289 (6th Cir.), cert. Denied, 484 U.S. 989 (1987); Texland Drilling Corp., 9 OSH Cases 1023 (Rev. Comm'n 1980). Commission has distilled its decisions as requiring four elements of proof: that (1) the employer has established work rules designated to prevent the violation; (2) it has adequately communicated those

rules to its employees; (3) it has taken steps to discovery violations; and (4) it has effectively enforced the rules when violations have been discovered. E.g., Capform Inc., 16 OSH Cases 2040, 2043 (rev. Comm'n 1994). Rabinowitz Occupational Safety and Health Law, 2008, 2nd Ed., pages 156.

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An employer has the affirmative duty to anticipate and protect against preventable hazardous conduct by employees. Leon Construction Co., 3 OSHC 1979, 1975-1976 OSHD ¶ 20,387 (1976). Employee misbehavior, standing alone, does not relieve an employer. Where the Secretary shows the existence of violative conditions, an employer may defend by showing that the employee's behavior was a deviation from a uniformly and effectively enforced work rule, of which deviation the employer had neither actual nor constructive knowledge. A. J. McNulty & Co., Inc., 4 OSHC 1097, 1975-1976 OSHD ¶ 20,600 (1976). (emphasis added)

In order to establish an unpreventable employee misconduct defense, the employer must establish that it had: established work rules designed to prevent the violation; adequately communicated those work rules to its employees (including supervisors); taken reasonable steps to discover violations of those work rules; and effectively enforced those work rules when they were violated. New York State Electric & Gas Corporation, 17 BNA OSHC 1129, 1195 CCH OSHD ¶30,745 (91-2897, 1995). (Emphasis added)

Although there is a similar doctrine of **supervisory** misconduct, some cases characterize it not as an affirmative defense but as a rebuttal of the imputation to the employer of the supervisor's The knowledge. Commission has stated that involvement by a supervisor in a violation is "strong evidence that the employer's safety program was lax." "Where a supervisory employee is involved, the proof of unpreventable employee misconduct is more rigorous and the defense is more difficult to establish since it is the supervisors' duty to protect the safety of employees under their supervision." Daniel Constr. Co., 10 OSH Cases 1549, 1552 (Rev. Comm'n 1982). Consolidated Freightways Corp., 15 OSH Cases 1317, 1321 (Rev. Comm'n 1991). Seyforth Roofing Co., 16 OSH Cases 2031 (Rev. Comm'n 1994). Rabinowitz Occupational Safety and Health Law, 2008, 2nd Ed., page 157. (Emphasis added)

". . . (A) supervisor's knowledge of deviations from standards . . . is properly imputed to the respondent employer . ." Division of Occupational Safety and Health vs. Pabco Gypsum, 105 Nev. 371, 775 P.2d 701 (1989).

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It is well settled that the knowledge, actual or employer's constructive, of an supervisory personnel will be imputed to the employer, unless the employer establishes substantial grounds for not doing so. Ormet Corp., 14 BNA OSHC 2134, 1991-93 CCH OSHD ¶29,254 85-531 1991). (No. Commission held that once there is a prima facie showing of employer knowledge through a supervisory employee, the employer can rebut that showing by establishing that the failure of the supervisory procedures follow employee to proper In particular, the employer must unpreventable. establish that it had relevant work rules that it adequately communicated and effectively enforced. Consolidated Freightways Corp., 15 BNA OSHC 1317, 1991-93 CCH OSHD \(29,500 \) (No. 86-531, 1991).

Employer knowledge, forseeability, and lack of safety enforcement by supervisory personnel prevents reliance upon the defense of unpreventable employee misconduct to relieve respondent of liability. The defense of unpreventable employee misconduct and the burden of proof to satisfy same is substantial under applicable law. Respondent presented insufficient evidence to support the defense to meet its burden of proof.

The board finds the testimony of CSHO Dressler and respondent general manager Pullen, together with the interview statements in evidence taken at the job site, established that Mr. Juan Garcia, was a company designated "lead man" or "foreman", and considered by employee Ortega to be "his foreman". Under any plain meaning of the facts in evidence, Mr. Juan Garcia occupied supervisory personnel status for the respondent. Further, the weight of credible evidence supports the CSHO testimony that he (Mr. Juan Garcia) while operating the forklift needed to observe the employees, including Mr. Ortega (Exhibit 5, photos 1-3),

and the area of the roof to "land" the forklift load where the employees were stacking the roofing materials. Mr. Juan Garcia had an open view of the employees as demonstrated in the CSHO testimony, and corroborated in the photographic exhibits and site description notwithstanding his (Mr. Garcia) reported statements to CSHO Dressler that he was unable to see the employees while he was loading the materials at the roof level where the employees, including Mr. Ortega, were standing. Regardless of the employee job titles, the weight of evidence established Mr. Garcia occupied a supervisory status. He told CSHO Dressler he was "running things." Mr. Ortega signed the witness statement in evidence confirming Mr. Garcia was "his foreman." The role and conduct demonstrated by supervisory employee Garcia must be imputed by law to the respondent employer and prevents reliance upon the defense of unpreventable employee misconduct.

In Sec'y of Labor v. Westar Energy, 20 BNA OSHC 1736 (OSHC Jan. 6, 2004) the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission ruled that "[w]here a supervising employee is involved, the proof of unpreventable employee misconduct is more rigorous and the defense is more difficult to establish since it is the supervisor's duty to protect the safety of employees under his supervision."

A further element of proof to support the defense of unpreventable employee misconduct requires proof the respondent has taken steps to discover violations and effectively enforced the rules when violations are discovered. The weight of evidence supports a finding that foreman/lead man Juan Garcia could easily observe the violative conduct of Mr. Ortega which was in plain view, and an inference that the employer safety program was not meaningfully implemented. Respondent had an ". . affirmative duty to anticipate and protect against

preventable hazardous conduct . . ." by Mr. Ortega. (See Leon supra,
page 10).

The Nevada Occupational Safety and Health Review Board has adopted the expanded employee misconduct defense to include supervisory employees; however the facts and weight of evidence here are insufficient to meet the respondent's burden of proof to rebut the prima facie case of violation. Mr. Ortega's violative conduct standing alone prevents reliance upon a lack of employer knowledge. The respondent ". . through the exercise of reasonable due diligence should have known of the violative condition." (D.A. Collins Construction Co., supra). This finding is exacerbated by the presence of the lead man, foreman, supervisory employee Juan Garcia, and also requires imputation of constructive knowledge to the employer respondent in proof of the violation.

It is the decision of the Nevada Occupational Safety and Health Review Board that a violation of Nevada Revised Statutes did occur as to Citation 1, Item 1, 29 CFR 1926.501(b)(10). The violation was properly classified as serious and the penalty proposed of TWO THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED TWENTY DOLLARS (\$2,520.00) are confirmed.

The Board directs counsel for the complainant, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER OF THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ENFORCEMENT SECTION, DIVISION OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, to prepare and submit proposed Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law to the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD and serve copies on opposing counsel within twenty (20) days from date of decision. After five (5) days time for filing any objection, the final Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law shall be submitted to the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD by prevailing counsel. Service of the Findings of Fact and

Conclusions of Law signed by the Chairman of the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL

SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD shall constitute the Final Order of the

BOARD.

DATED: This 24th day of April, 2013.

NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD

/s/

JOE ADAMS, CHAIRMAN