

N E W S R E L E A S E

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Cal/OSHA Cites Solar Panel Installers for Willful Failure to Protect Employee from 29-Foot Fall

Fontana—Cal/OSHA has cited Elite Electric Inc. for serious and willful safety violations after a worker installing solar panels in Fontana fell 29 feet through a skylight. Elite did not provide their employees with required fall protection, even though the Riverside company charged the building owner for it. As a result, the 29-year-old employee suffered severe head trauma, cognitive impairment, multiple pelvis fractures, fractured ribs and a collapsed lung.

Cal/OSHA investigators learned that when the accident occurred on June 13, there was no evidence of fall protection at the site, despite the hazards presented by more than 140 skylights in the roof of the building, a rooftop access hatch, and the unguarded edges of the roof. The employee who fell did not receive any personal protective equipment from his employer.

“Falling is the leading cause of death in the construction industry,” said Cal/OSHA Chief Juliann Sum. “It is critical for employers to prevent workers—especially those working from great heights—from being injured or killed from falls. This employer was aware of their responsibility and completely failed to fulfill it.”

Cal/OSHA issued five workplace safety citations to Elite Electric this week, with proposed penalties of \$130,125. One of the citations is general, three are serious, and one is willful-serious. A serious violation is cited when there is a realistic possibility that death or serious harm could result from the actual hazardous condition. A willful violation is cited when the employer is aware of the law and violates it nevertheless, or when the employer is aware of the hazardous condition and takes no reasonable steps to address it.

In this case, the willful-serious violation stems from Elite Electric’s failure to protect employees approaching within 6 feet of any skylight during the installation of solar panels from falling through them. It is [a requirement](#) that employers use such measures as guardrails, personal fall protection systems, covers, screens or nets. Elite obtained

payment for these protections, which is evidence that company management was aware of the need for them.

Cal/OSHA helps protect workers from health and safety hazards on the job in almost every workplace in California. [Cal/OSHA's Consultation Services Branch](#) provides free and voluntary assistance to employers to improve their health and safety programs. Employers should call (800) 963-9424 for assistance from Cal/OSHA Consultation Services. Cal/OSHA has also published a wealth of helpful guides for employers, including ones on [mitigating health and safety hazards at construction sites](#).

Employees with work-related questions or complaints may contact DIR's Call Center in English or Spanish at 844-LABOR-DIR (844-522-6734). The California Workers' Information line at 866-924-9757 provides recorded information in English and Spanish on a variety of work-related topics. Complaints can also be filed confidentially with [Cal/OSHA district offices](#).

Members of the press may contact Erika Monterroza or Peter Melton at (510) 286-1161, and are encouraged to [subscribe to get email alerts](#) on DIR's press releases or other departmental updates.

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