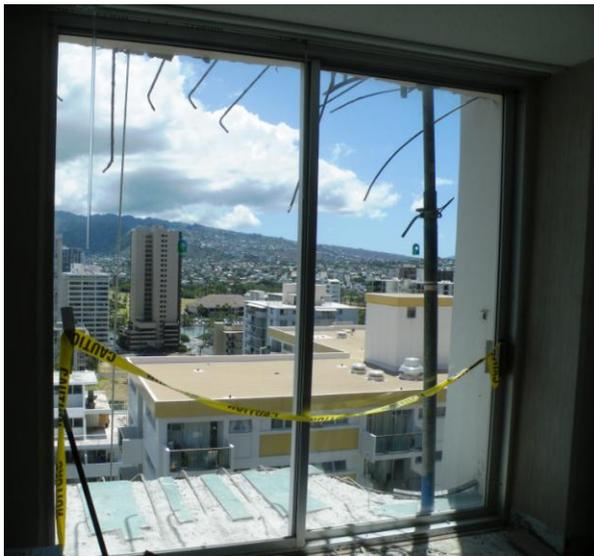


Injured by Collapsing Balcony

In mid 2009, an 18th floor balcony of a hotel which was undergoing restoration, collapsed when an employee walked onto the balcony. The collapsed balcony and the employee fell onto the balcony below where two other employees were working. One of the employees below was injured from falling pieces of broken concrete. The other employee below panicked and jumped out onto a suspension scaffold hanging three floors below.

The employee who stepped on the upper balcony sustained a sprained wrist and contusions, and was released from the hospital the same day. The other two employees were diagnosed with fractures, and remained in the hospital for two weeks.



The investigation found that the employer did not take proper precautions to assess the integrity of the balconies and to prevent employees from walking on weakened balconies. Furthermore, the balcony railings while under renovation had their footings exposed, making them incapable of supporting the required weight to function as a guard rail. The employer did not provide a supplemental fall protection system, and did not require employees to use their personal fall arrest systems when working on balconies. The employer also did not ensure that all employees had received fall protection training.

Citations were issued in the amount of \$4,500.

Recommendations:

1. Each project should have a site-specific Job Hazard Analysis and action plan, and the employer should communicate these to all employees.
2. If necessary, an engineering survey should be done to evaluate the condition and strength of walking and working surfaces before allowing employees to access them.
3. Prohibit employees from accessing areas which have been identified as unsafe work surfaces.
4. Train and certify employees on the use of proper fall protection prior to exposing them to fall hazards.
5. Enforce the use of fall protection whenever employees are exposed to fall hazards.