

## Investigation Process

### *What triggers an investigation by the N.C. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Division?*

- A worker's death.
- Hospitalization of an employee, an amputation or the loss of an eye.
- The department may also receive information of a fatality or catastrophe from media reports or referrals from other government agencies.

### *How is the NCDOL OSH Division notified?*

- An employer must notify NCDOL within eight hours of any work-related fatality. In-patient hospitalizations of one or more employees, any work-related amputation, and any work-related loss of an eye must be reported within 24 hours.

### *What will the investigation focus on?*

- The investigation will usually be limited to the events surrounding the accident unless observations at the site indicate a broader investigation is needed.

### *What will happen during the investigation?*

- An OSH investigator will go to the accident site and collect physical evidence, including photographs.
- The investigator will interview employees, witnesses and management officials about the accident to determine its cause.
- Any violations of safety and health standards will be noted and citations will be issued.

### *How long will the investigation take?*

- An investigation can take anywhere from a few weeks to six months, depending on the complexity of the accident.

### *When are investigation results disclosed?*

- Citations and penalties, if issued, can be released to the public on the issuance date.
- Other contents of the file cannot be released until the case is closed or final order on citations is rendered.



N.C. Department of Labor  
Occupational Safety and Health Division  
1101 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1101  
[www.labor.nc.gov](http://www.labor.nc.gov)  
1-800-NC-LABOR

Josh Dobson, Commissioner

## The Investigation

Investigators will seek to determine several factors, including whether:

- A 100 percent fall protection system compatible with the task assigned was provided.
- The climbing job was planned by a competent person.
- Inspections were completed of all climbing facilities and fall protection equipment prior to a climb.
- Observed climbing facility related hazards were abated before the climb began.
- Any defective fall protection equipment was removed from service prior to a climb.
- A fall protection plan was developed in situations in which a fall protection system was not feasible.
- The employer had established a procedure for rescue of employees in the event of an emergency.
- At least two employees were on site that were trained and certified in basic first aid and CPR.
- Employees required to work at heights above 6 feet on a communication tower had been approved for such work by a qualified person.
- Training records were available for review by the OSH investigator.



Photo: NCDOL/Neal O'Briant

**Standards:** 13 NCAC 07F.0600, Communication Tower Standards; 29 CFR 1910.268, Telecommunications; 29 CFR 1910.269, Electric Power Generation; 29 CFR 1926.500, Fall Protection

**Industry Type:** Construction and General Industry

**Accident Type:** Fall from communication tower

*North Carolina had no work-related fatalities involving communication towers in calendar years 2019 and 2020.*

### *What programs does the Department of Labor have in place to prevent comm tower accidents?*

**Communication tower special emphasis program:** Increased training and consultation for communication tower companies and their employees. North Carolina was the first state in the nation to adopt a specific communication tower standard to address the safety problems in the industry.