

## Cell Tower Technician Dies after Antenna Array Falls and Decapitates Him

### Case Summary

On July 2, 2014, at approximately 2:15 pm, a 28-year-old tower technician and father of three was 242 feet in the air on a cellular tower performing maintenance. His task was to upgrade and replace 3 antenna arrays or “booms” that weighed approximately 1800 lbs. each. The victim was on the load-bearing side of the tower while another employee was on the opposite side, 25 feet below the victim. The crew had already replaced 2 of the 3 antenna arrays and was in the process of setting the third in its place, when they heard a loud pop. The antenna array was 15 feet above the victim on a McKissick “Snatch Block” pulley, Model 419.



The supporting shackle suffered a catastrophic failure causing the cable to snap. The antenna array crashed down striking three points on the tower, then the cables amputated the victim’s head, and right arm. The employee on the opposite side immediately radioed the ground crew and reported the victim’s demise. The ground crew called 911, at 2:22 pm, to report the fatality and ask for assistance in lowering the victim to the ground. They also requested power shut-off for an energized electric line contacting the broken cables. Emergency crews arrived on the scene, minutes later, to begin the tedious process of lowering the victim to the ground.

### **What steps can be made to prevent such incidents?**

**Recommendation No. 1: Employers should ensure that a competent rigger is on site to perform a site hazard assessment before work is performed.**

**Recommendation No. 2: Employers should ensure that all tower technicians are competent and trained on proper equipment use, procedures, and how to safely do their jobs.**

**Recommendation No. 3: Employers should ensure that regular inspection of required antenna replacement equipment is performed before initiating work.**

**Recommendation No. 4: Cell tower employers should ensure that antenna replacement equipment is used properly and according to manufacturers’ recommendations.**

For access to the entire report, visit:

<http://www.mc.uky.edu/kiprc/projects/KOSHS/face/data/Reports/14KY032.pdf>