

DOL FINES NEW JERSEY CONTRACTORS NEARLY HALF A MILLION DOLLARS



Four New Jersey contractors have been cited for unsafe conditions and fined a total of \$463,350 by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). The businesses – Altura Concrete, Inc. and Nathil Corp., both of Hasbrouck Heights, and White Diamonds Properties, LLC and Blade Contracting, Inc., both of Jersey City – have been working on a 20-story building in Jersey City. The fines ultimately stemmed from a December 2011 inspection, when inspectors noted that workers were exposed to fall hazards – specifically employees on the fourth floor with neither personal fall protection nor fall protection systems. Altura Concrete and Nathil Corp. had 75 onsite employees working on the building’s foundation and superstructure. Both companies were cited for five willful violations for fall hazards created by open sides and edges on the fourth through eighth floors and the 10th and 13th floors. Similarly, workers were not protected from hazards created by the mishandling of self-supporting stepladders. The businesses’ penalties totaled \$315,000. The two companies were further cited for nine serious violations totaling \$40,500 in penalties. These include a failure to: provide personal protective equipment, provide a cap for an acetylene tank in storage, store cylinders in an upright position, separate oxygen and acetylene tanks, provide fall protection for employees installing ribs, provide protection from protruding rebar, maintain shoring/re-shoring plans onsite, provide stair railings, and provide protection from hazardous open holes by securing and marking the cover over a floor hole. One additional citation, not recording an injury on the OSHA 300 log, carried a \$900 penalty. General contractor White Diamonds Properties had seven employees onsite and was cited for two willful violations for failing to protect workers from fall hazards. There were also five serious violations, including improper storage of compressed gas cylinders, unprotected rebar, and not having drawings for shoring/re-shoring onsite. The penalties for the citations were \$95,400. Blade Contracting, a masonry contractor, was penalized \$11,550. With 21 employees working onsite, the company was cited for three serious violations for fall



hazards, as well as improperly using a scaffold and not inspecting scaffold components for defects. “Year after year, falls remain the leading cause of death in the construction industry, accounting for almost one in every three construction worker deaths,” said Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health Dr. David Michaels in a DOL press release. Michaels summarized OSHA’s message as “Safety pays and falls costs.” He added, “We know how to prevent falls, and employers have a clear responsibility to provide the right equipment and procedures. When working at heights, everyone needs to plan ahead to get the job done safely, provide the right equipment and train workers to use the equipment safely.” Robert Kulick, OSHA’s regional administrator in New York, said, “A project of this magnitude clearly needs an aggressive injury and illness prevention plan in place to prevent falls and other hazards. When management and workers together proactively identify and eliminate hazardous conditions, workers are better protected.”

“Year after year, falls remain