

Two XPO Logistics workers killed near Buffalo, New York

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4 July 2018

At the XPO Logistics warehouse in Lockport, New York near Buffalo two workers were killed early June 25 at approximately 1:30 a.m. Christopher Klosin, 38, and Roger Mangine, 62, were attempting to unload 11 slabs of Dupont's Corian brand countertop weighing over 800 pounds each when the slabs toppled over on top of them.

Wendy Klosin, Christopher's sister, said in remarks to Bufflonews.com that she had spoken to her brother before he started his shift at XPO that night. She reported that he had been working at the company a little over a year. She continued, "He was down to earth, funny. He loved his family and just enjoyed life. He married seven years ago on Christmas Eve and had three stepchildren." Dona Chase, one of Roger Mangine's three stepchildren, said of him, "He was very friendly, very generous. He would give you the shirt off his back, even if you were a complete stranger."

XPO is the third largest transportation company in the United States behind only Federal Express (FedEx) and United Parcel Service (UPS). The company pulled in \$15.3 billion and had a net income \$360.2 million in 2017, with a current total employment of 95,000.

The transportation and warehousing industries are some of the most dangerous professions in the US. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported 1,388 deaths of workers in the transport and material moving sector in 2016, a 7 percent increase from the prior year.

By its own admission the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is underfunded and staffed too lightly to handle timely inspections of all workplaces. Underscoring this is XPO's record of violations with OSHA, where a complaint from a worker on January 25, 2018 concerning a forklift safety issue in their Albany, NY facility remains unresolved.

Throughout XPO's US locations where there have been OSHA safety and health inspections, a significant number of those were initiated by workers reporting unsafe conditions, often resulting in violations with fines.

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters has made attempts to unionize the workers at XPO, but were recently rejected by workers, who had taken measure of the union at XPO's Albany, New York facility.

Illustrative of the Teamsters indifference to worker safety has been the lack of any investigation into the dangerous conditions that led to the death of William Stubbs, 51, a UPS worker who was killed on December 15 last year at the UPS hub near Atlanta, Georgia. A search for William Stubbs at the Teamster's web page and the Teamster's 728 Local web page returned no results. According to OSHA there have been many complaints from UPS workers calling for safety inspections.

A search for an OSHA inspection or investigation into the death William Stubbs also returned no results. According to William Scime, the OSHA Buffalo area director, the agency is required to complete a report within six months.

It has been reported in the media that Klosin and Mangine were inside a trailer unloading slabs, which had been stacked on edge. The usual width of the van trailer is eight feet. Though the method they use to unload the slabs hasn't been revealed, it is likely that they were standing upright against the trailer wall unrestrained.

Press photos of XPO's outdoor storage yard showed that many of the slabs were stacked on steel A-frame racks that allow them to rest safely at an angle, and while unloading mechanical restraints hold the remaining slabs in place. They are lifted one at a time

by a boom and grapple forklift attachment to prevent from overloading the forklift and compromising the integrity of the floor of the trailer. This ostensibly is a two-person operation, with a forklift operator and helper on the ground to attach the grapple.

The weight of slabs on one side of the trailer might have been close to exceeding the limits of straps and the built-in retention systems. Klosin and Manginge could have even been taken by surprise from an unexpected failure of the straps. Most building materials of that nature are transported on open flatbed trucks or trailers on racks; while the material is generally stored outdoors on the same types of racks.

Why were Klosin and Manginge unloading slabs in a trailer that has a limited height, which could restrict the use of the reasonably safe method of forklift with boom/grapple? Did XPO management, in an effort to save money, turn a blind eye to unsafe conditions that led to the death of two workers?

The Dupont factory that manufactures the countertop recently contracted XPO to distribute the slabs from their factory in Tonawanda near Buffalo to XPO's nearby Lockport warehouse for storage and later shipment. Dupont was on OSHA's severe violator list for a fatality at the Tonawanda plant and for three workers killed at a Texas plant. 320 Dupont workers are members of the United Steel Workers (USW) union in Tonawanda.

To answer the rising death toll, XPO, UPS, and Federal Express workers should organize rank-and-file workplace committees, independent of both the company and trade unions, to investigate the recent accidents. Transport workers across the United States and internationally should reach out to fellow workers in the industry, as well as other industries, to defend themselves against the attacks on safety and working conditions being carried out in the mad chase after profits that far exceed any nominal fines imposed by the so called state and federal oversight agencies.



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