

Dockworker killed in 50-foot fall at Port of Los Angeles

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18 June 2026

On the afternoon of June 7, experienced hatch foreman Marc Salgado fell roughly 50 feet from an elevated catwalk aboard the container vessel *C/V Ever Legion*, moored at APM Terminals Pier 400 at the Port of Los Angeles.

Salgado was overseeing the loading and unloading of containers on a 9,604-TEU vessel operated by Evergreen Marine Corporation, one of the giants of the global shipping cartel. At approximately 4:45 p.m., Salgado plunged through an opening in the catwalk's perimeter and struck a hatch lid below. Preliminary reports suggest a chain guardrail either parted or was left unsecured. Paramedics pronounced him dead at the scene.

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union issued a brief bulletin titled “Tragedy at APMT” the following day, and operations at the port continued with minimal interruption. Cal/OSHA and the Coast Guard have opened investigations.

Salgado's death is the latest preventable fatality in a list stretching back years across the San Pedro Bay terminals and across the US, each one the predictable outcome of a system that subordinates human life to the velocity of container throughput.

On May 15, 2019, Jose Santoyo, 58, was killed when a five-to-six-foot top-loader tire catastrophically exploded while he was inflating it at the Fenix Marine Services terminal at Pier 300. The blast also inflicted severe head injuries on his coworker Pedro Chavarin. The death occurred on the day of the ILWU's annual “First Blood” commemoration, which honors longshoremen killed by company goons during the 1934 strike.

On January 18, 2022, Edgar Ruiz, a 37-year-old ironworker and crane oiler, was crushed by a 4,500-pound piece of metal that slipped from a forklift

while he was assembling a crane at APMT Pier 400. His regular partner was absent that day; a co-owner of BHC Crane operated the forklift instead. It took over an hour for emergency personnel to arrive. Ruiz's coworkers confirmed that BHC employees routinely faced shifts of up to 20 hours.

On January 25, 2023, a third-party repairman fell 50 feet from the superstructure of the *Maersk Eindhoven* into a cargo hold at APMT Pier 400. There was no fall-prevention netting. Despite the catastrophic nature of the fall, port dispatchers refused to pause operations, forcing workers to continue loading and discharging the vessel at full service.

On March 18, 2024, Bohdan Salmanov, 32, was crushed to death when his industrial forklift tipped over at Berth 270 on Terminal Island. The fatality occurred amid a surge in cargo volumes after a pro-corporate contract was forced on dockworkers in 2023.

Regulatory agencies do little to enforce safety standards. A California State Auditor's report released in July 2025 documented a regulatory apparatus in advanced decomposition.

Cal/OSHA operates with a 32 percent vacancy rate overall, rising to 46 percent for field inspectors and an astonishing 81 percent for industrial hygienists. In fiscal year 2023–24, the agency conducted on-site inspections for just 17 percent of validated worker complaints. The remaining 82 percent were handled by letter—the agency simply asked employers to self-certify that hazards had been resolved.

Fifty-eight percent of employer-reported accidents involving severe injuries were handled by mail. Fines were routinely slashed by over 50 percent after employer appeals.

With the approval of the Democratic-controlled state legislature, Governor Gavin Newsom slashed

Cal/OSHA's enforcement budget by \$16 million for 2025–26 and has proposed a further 14 percent cut for 2026–27, despite the agency sitting on over \$200 million in independent assessment fund surpluses. Newsom also vetoed Senate Bill 1299, which would have strengthened heat safety enforcement for outdoor workers, under pressure from the California Chamber of Commerce.

Meanwhile, the jurisdictional fracture between federal OSHA (which governs shipboard operations) and Cal/OSHA (which governs shoreside terminals) creates a regulatory no-man's-land that terminal operators and vessel owners exploit with precision. The gangway is the legal boundary. When Marc Salgado fell from the *Ever Legion's* catwalk, he fell on the federal side, into an agency whose budget Trump's Labor Secretary is slashing by 8 percent, eliminating 223 staff positions and 10,000 inspections annually.

The ILWU and its East Coast counterpart, the International Longshoremen's Association, have done nothing to seriously address the constant risk of injury and death on the docks, presenting it as an inevitable feature of the job rather than something workers can and must fight to eliminate.

ILA President Harold Daggett, who takes home over \$1 million a year and runs the union as a family fiefdom alongside his son Dennis, has declared that dock work is “very dangerous ... unpredictable, and high-risk. Human oversight isn't optional, it's essential.” ILWU Local 94 leadership has stated that “working conditions on the waterfront terminals of the West Coast today are more dangerous than they were back in 1934.”

When workers die, the union's response is suppression, not mobilization. After Chulaih Ang was struck and killed by a transtainer in January 2022, the ILWU did not publicize the death. It was only after rank-and-file workers shared cellphone photos of the accident scene on social media that the union issued a formal warning demanding that workers cease sharing images. After the fall on the *Maersk Eindhoven*, the union allowed dispatchers to maintain full-service operations on the vessel. After Marc Salgado's death, the ILWU issued a brief bulletin and moved on.

This is in keeping with the union bureaucracy's collusion with management and the government. The 2023 West Coast contract was forced through after the

ILWU kept workers on the job for over a year without a contract, in coordination with the Biden administration. The 2024 ILA contract was brokered by Biden as well as Trump himself when Daggett met him personally at Mar-a-Lago that December. In both cases, the bureaucracy delivered “labor peace” to the shipping cartels while workers' safety concerns were buried.

The union apparatus is structurally incapable of defending workers' lives because its own privileged position depends on the suppression of the class struggle. What is required is the building of independent rank-and-file committees, democratically controlled by workers themselves, with the power to investigate every injury and death, document safety violations and crucially halt production when lives are threatened.



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