Two construction workers killed in Texas, truck driver in Utah severely injured

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On August 27 at 4:20 pm, two workers at a south Austin, Texas suburban construction site were trapped after a two-story house under construction collapsed on top of them. One worker suffered traumatic injuries and was pronounced dead at the scene. The other had leg injuries and was airlifted to a hospital and released the next day. Officials said four workers were inside the house when it collapsed and two were fortunate to escape injury.

The collapse was caused by 50-70 mile per hour winds during a heavy rainstorm, which knocked over the house and trapped the two workers in-between the tresses underneath the roof. Travis County Emergency Services District 5 Fire Chief, Chris Barron, described the house as "toothpicks with a roof on top," saying that the strong winds "basically pushed the house over."

Both workers were subcontractors for KB Home, which suspended work at the site of the incident. According to records from the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), KB Homes and its subsidiaries have received at least six fines for violations of workplace health and safety regulations since 2009. An investigation into the incident has been launched by OSHA that officials say will take up to six months to complete.

A week later, another Texas construction worker in El Paso was crushed to death by heavy machinery. The worker, who was identified as 36-year-old Ramiro Aaron Sanchez, was an employee of Wagner Equipment and was conducting maintenance on a piece of heavy machinery when it fell on him. Little information about the incident has been reported except that police ruled out foul play as a potential cause.

On the same day as the first tragedy in Austin occurred, a worker in Utah was crushed between two truck trailers and severely injured. Shawn Peterson, a truck driver for logistics company Saia, was conducting his shift pre-check the night of August 26 when he was crushed by a triple trailer backing up. Although he saw the rig backing up and shouted to gain the attention of the driver, he was crushed between the two trailers. According to Peterson's family, he was rushed to IHC Critical Care and Trauma Center and went into cardiac arrest en route.

A GoFundMe page set up by Peterson's family states, "he has endured internal bleeding, multiple surgeries to stop the bleeding and remove portions of vital organs, spinal cord injuries with rods and screws placed in his vertebrae, and we are being told he will most likely never have use of his legs." He also suffered "a broken arm, a concussion, and remains in a medically induced coma with a breathing machine helping him breathe," family members wrote.

As of this writing the GoFundMe had raised nearly $13,000 for his medical care. Peterson is a father to four children, including a child who had recently been released from the Newborn Intensive Care Unit. Local news Fox13 reported that the family had received little communication from Saia following the incident, quoting Peterson's father-in-law, Jeff Fuller, saying "We've had no phone calls; we've had no, 'Hey, how's he doing?' ... It's a very unfortunate situation that I think he deserves a little more attention, especially from his company."

Saia issued a terse statement that their "thoughts are with our employee and their family. We are focused on supporting them while cooperating with the appropriate authorities as we review the circumstances surrounding the incident."

The job safety web site Confined Space, which posts the "Weekly Toll" of deaths in US workplaces,

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reported at least 20 workplace fatalities between August 25 and September 4. The victims include: Seth Vaughn, 27, who was caught in a conveyor belt at a gravel pit in Twin Falls, Idaho; Carl Williams III, 31, a sanitation worker killed after a garbage truck overturned in Silsbee, Texas; Bradley Clouse, 33, crushed by machinery at the Astemo Americas auto parts plant in Berea, Kentucky; and Moet McCullum, 41, a New York City transit worker who was struck by a subway train near the 161st Street-Yankee Stadium stop in Bronx, New York.

These incidents show the constant and present danger workers face on a daily basis in America's industrial slaughterhouse. According to the Bureau of Labor statistics there were 5,070 worker deaths and nearly 2.5 million injuries and illnesses in 2024—the latest government figures available. On average, 100 workers die every week from traumatic injuries on the job. More than 20 times as many die from occupational diseases, largely due to exposure to hazardous substances.

This horrific toll will only increase as cuts to worker safety regulations increase under the Trump administration, which has decreased funding to OSHA by 8 percent from $632.3 million down to $582.4 million. The agency's staff has been reduced from 1,810 to 1,587, shrinking the already scarce protections for workers even further. The administration is also cutting up to 60 rules and regulations meant to protect workers' health. Among these are some of the most basic protections, such as the general duty clause, which allows enforcement of existing regulations.

The administration will also terminate the system which monitors the amount of COVID-related deaths and also terminating the standards for respiratory protections in the workplace, both of these deregulations will make the working class much more vulnerable to COVID-19 strains and other respiratory hazards. The administration claims these cuts will "unleash prosperity" when in fact they will unleash more deaths, less safety and more profit for the ruling class.

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