



ASHLEY GILBERTSON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

"There is a real problem with construction safety," said Mark G. Peters of the New York City Investigation Department.

Safety Citations and Anonymous Deaths

Undocumented Laborers Are Hit the Hardest in New York's Building Boom

By DAVID W. CHEN

Manuel Colorado, a 36-year-old construction worker, was installing decking last year at a new building in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, when he lost his balance and fell 19 feet to his death.

A few weeks later, a guest at the Dream Hotel in Midtown Manhattan heard someone screaming outside. Gurmeet Singh, a 58-year-old Indian immigrant doing facade work on the building, had tumbled eight stories off a scaffold and landed atop a sidewalk shed.

Twelve days after Mr. Singh's death, Lukasz Stolarski, 33, plummeted 110 feet from the roof of an office building in Midtown where he had been attaching plywood to the parapet ledge.

New York City is experiencing a build-

ing boom that has transformed barren blocks and led to a frenzy of construction on commercial and residential buildings across all five boroughs. But that activity has come at a cost: In the last two years, the number of workers hurt and killed in construction accidents has surged.

The rise in deaths and injuries — mostly among undocumented immigrant laborers — far exceeds the rate of new construction over the same period. It is stark evidence of the view increasingly held by safety inspectors, government officials and prosecutors, that safety measures at these job sites are woefully inadequate.

A review of every construction fatality in the past two years by The New York Times has found that many could have been, as a federal investigation into one

accident put it, "completely avoidable." Time and again, in thousands of pages of safety reports, handwritten notes, crude drawings, lawsuits and other documents, as well as interviews with the workers' relatives and friends, the same issues emerged.

Most construction sites where workers died failed to take basic steps to prevent them from falling. Workers frequently did not wear harnesses or helmets, as required by law. Supervision was often lacking. In many of the projects, a premium was placed on speed, causing workers to take dangerous shortcuts.

About a quarter of the deaths took place in Midtown, attracting news media attention. But the rest occurred, largely unno-

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