

Bricklaying Not a One-Person Job

Dear Sir:

I am writing in response to your request for additional information. In block number three of the accident report form, I put “trying to do the job alone” as the cause of my accident. You said in your letter that I should explain more fully, and I trust that the following details will be sufficient.

I am a bricklayer by trade. On the date of the accident I was working alone on the roof of a new six-story building. When I completed my work, I discovered that I had about 500 pounds of brick left over. Rather than carry the bricks down by hand, I decided to lower them in a barrel by using a pulley that, fortunately, was attached to the side of the building at the sixth floor.

Securing the rope at ground level, I went up to the roof, swung the barrel out, and loaded the bricks into it. Then I went back to the ground and untied the rope, holding it tightly to ensure a slow descent of the 500 pounds of brick. You will note in block number 11 of the accident report form that I weigh 135 pounds.

Due to my surprise at being jerked off the ground so suddenly, I lost my presence of mind and forgot to let go of the rope. Needless to say, I proceeded at a rather rapid rate up the side of the building.

In the vicinity of the third floor I met the barrel coming down. This explains the fractured skull and broken collarbone. Slowed only slightly, I continued my rapid ascent, not stopping until the fingers of my right hand were two knuckles deep into the pulley.

Fortunately, by that time, I had regained my presence of mind and was able to hold tightly to the rope in spite of my pain.

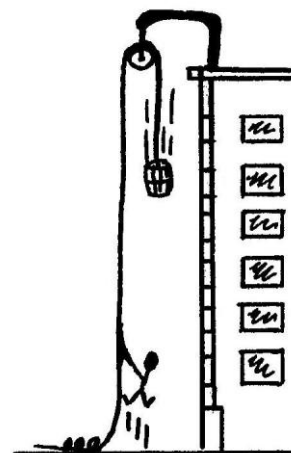
At approximately the same time, however, the barrel of bricks hit the ground—and the bottom fell out of the barrel. Devoid of the weight of the bricks, the barrel now weighed approximately 50 pounds.

I refer you again to my weight in block number 11. As you might imagine, I began a rapid descent down the side of the building.

In the vicinity of the third floor I met the barrel coming up. This accounts for the two fractured ankles and the lacerations of my legs and lower body. The encounter with the barrel slowed me enough to lessen my injuries when I fell onto the pile of bricks, and fortunately, only three vertebrae were cracked.

I'm sorry to report, however, that as I lay there on the bricks, in pain, unable to stand, and watching the empty barrel six stories above me—I again lost my presence of mind and let go of the rope. The empty barrel weighed more than the rope, so it came back down on me and broke both my legs.

I hope I have furnished the information you require as to how the accident occurred.



(Name withheld out of kindness)