



25-Year-Old Construction Worker Receives First Full Face Transplant

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A 25-year-old construction worker who lost most of his facial features to electrical burns became the first person in the US to receive a full face transplant.

May 12, 2011 /24-7PressRelease/ -- A 25-year-old construction worker who suffered catastrophic electrical burns to his face became the first person in the U.S. to receive a full face transplant in March.

Dallas Wiehs was operating a boom lift in 2008 when it came into contact with an overhead power line. The [construction accident](#) cost Wiehs' most of his face, including both of his eyes, nose and eyebrows. He spent three months following the accident in a coma and underwent more than 20 surgeries to try to repair some of the damage.

A team of 30 doctors at Brigham & Women's Hospital performed the 15-hour long transplant procedure, which included not only transplanting an entire new face, but also transplanting the nerve and muscle tissue necessary to help restore some feeling and movement.

Wiehs was reportedly in good condition following the procedure. The lead plastic surgeon, Dr. Bohdan Pomahac, believes Wiehs has a good chance of regaining up to 90 percent sensation in his new forehead, cheeks and lips.

Electrocution One of Most Common Causes of Death for Construction Workers

The tragic accident that almost cost Dallas Wiehs his life is just one example of how dangerous the construction industry really is. Construction has one of the highest fatality rates of any occupation. Each day in the U.S., an estimated four construction workers die. According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 800 construction workers died and another 92,000 were injured nationwide in 2008.

The leading causes of death for construction workers are:

- Falls
- Transportation-related deaths
- [Electrocution](#)
- Contact with falling objects
- Dangerous or defective equipment and machinery
- Cave-ins
- Exposure to dangerous chemicals and other substances



Falls, including those from [scaffolding accidents](#) and others involving ladders, lifts and other heights, are the number one cause of injury and death among construction workers. According to a recent report released by the City's Buildings Department, falls were responsible for taking the lives of four construction workers in New York City in 2010. Nationally, falls were responsible for 34 percent of all construction worker fatalities in 2009.

Electrocution is another leading killer of construction workers. According to NIOSH, there are an estimated 700 occupationally-related electrocutions in the U.S. every year, with construction workers accounting for 400 of these deaths.

In addition to electrocution, construction workers who come into contact with overhead power lines, buried cables and other sources of high voltage electricity can suffer severe burns, electric shock, falls and have their hearts stopped. According to NIOSH data, cranes coming into contact with overhead power lines account for more than half of all electrocutions in the construction industry.

Injured Workers' Rights in New York

While the incidence of construction accidents has decreased recently in New York and throughout the rest of the country, this decrease is as likely attributable to the reduced number of new construction projects as it is to improved workplace safety. Even with the decline in total number of accidents, construction workers still sustain on-the-job injuries at a rate nearly three times greater than any other group of workers.

When a worker is injured on a New York construction site, he or she has the right to file for [workers' compensation](#). Under state law, every employer is required to carry workers' comp insurance for their workers. Workers who are injured on the job, regardless of whether it is their fault, a co-worker's or the employer's, can file a claim for these benefits.

Some of the workers' comp benefits available in New York include:

- Cash benefits: injured workers who miss time from work or have to cut back on their hours or even change positions as a result of their on-the-job injuries may be entitled to cash benefits to help replace some of their lost wages. To be eligible, the injured worker must have been out of work for at least seven days. Cash benefits generally are paid at a rate of two-thirds of the worker's average weekly wages the year prior to the injury and are subject to a weekly maximum cap.
- Medical benefits: all injured workers are entitled to full payment of all necessary medical expenses incurred as a result of the workplace injury. This includes emergency room expenses, follow-up doctor appointments, medication, rehabilitation and other reasonably related health care costs.
- Death benefits: when a worker dies as a result of a workplace injury, his or her surviving family members are entitled to death benefits under the employer's workers' compensation plan. These benefits typically pay for funeral and burial expenses and two-thirds of the worker's average weekly wages.

Under New York law, workers are required to inform their employers of their injuries in writing within 30 days of the accident. Workers also are required to file a claim with their local Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) office within two years of the date of the accident or within two years of



when they reasonably knew their injury was due to a work-related accident.

Workers' compensation is the exclusive remedy for injured workers against their employers. This means that workers who are involved in work-related accidents or who develop an occupationally-related disease or illness cannot sue their employers for additional damages, even if they do not file a workers' comp claim.

However, this does not mean that workers' comp is an exclusive remedy against all parties who may share potential liability for a worker's injuries. In some cases, workers can bring what is known as a third party claim against other parties who may be at least partially to blame for the worker's harm.

Some examples of third parties who may share responsibility for a construction accident include:

- Property owners
- Contractors
- Sub-contractors
- Product suppliers
- Machine and equipment manufacturers

Contact an Experienced Workers' Comp and Construction Accident Attorney

If you have been involved in a construction accident or sustained another type of on-the-job injury, you have the right under New York law to file a claim for workers' compensation benefits. These benefits can help replace some of your wages and cover your medical expenses while you recover from your injury.

If your claim for workers' comp benefits has been denied or your benefits have been wrongfully terminated, contact a workers' comp attorney today. A lawyer with experience helping injured workers can review your claim and appeal a denial of benefits on your behalf - as well as investigate possible claims against third-parties.