

Cal-OSHA fines San Leandro metal recycler after death of mechanic

By Lisa Fernandez | Published July 10, 2025 10:28am PDT | San Leandro | KTVU FOX 2 |

The Brief

- Cal-OSHA is proposing fining Alco Iron & Metal in San Leandro \$95,000 in fines after the workplace death of a mechanic.
- The mechanic, Luis Guerrero, is one of three Alco employees to die on the job in eight years.
- Alco did not immediately respond to the fine and has the right to appeal.

OAKLAND, Calif. - Cal-OSHA, the state agency that oversees safety in the workplace, has fined a San Leandro metal recycler \$95,000 following the death of a mechanic – [one of three employee deaths in the last eight years](#), KTVU has learned.

\$95K fine

Peter Melton, a spokesman for the state Occupational Safety and Health Administration, said that the agency fined Alco Iron & Metal on June 17 following the Jan. 8 death of Luis Guerrero, 41, of Castro Valley, who was killed after a forklift fell on him while he was trying to fix it.

KTVU obtained exclusive video showing what happened that day, which shows Guerreo walking to the back of the broken forklift, and the machine taking a swift nosedive to the ground, trapping him underneath. He is seen flat on his back, as employees rush to his aid.

The violations are classified as one general, three serious and two serious accident-related. The proposed penalties are \$95,000.

What the company says

A spokesman for Alco Iron & Metal did not immediately respond on Thursday, or indicate whether the company would appeal those fines.

Alco Iron & Metal has been recycling, fabricating and selling metal products to

customers in the United States and internationally since 1953, according to its website.

Alco has five facilities in San Leandro, two in Vallejo, Stockton and San Jose. The company has approximately 200 employees.

[In an earlier statement provided to KTVU](#), the company said that they have "always been a safe and family-oriented place to work."

"Alco truly is a family, and all of us watch out and care for each other," the statement read. "Alco prides itself on a robust safety training program and a culture where all management and employees buy into its importance."

The company also said that "each of our employees is required to go through a rigorous training orientation when they are hired and that training is refreshed on a regular basis during their employment."

Experts say not enough

Guerrero's family declined to comment.

But Garrett Brown, a retired Cal-OSHA field enforcement inspector who personally cited Alco in the 1990s, said he's glad the company was cited, but this amount for a man's life "does not represent a meaningful deterrent."

"It is totally unacceptable that preventable deaths occur because of irresponsible employers like ALCO Iron & Metal," he said on Thursday.

He added that it's unfortunate that Cal-OSHA's fines is much lower than fines granted to other governmental agencies, such as the EPA for environmental crimes.

"No amount of money can compensate the family for the death of their loved one, of course," Brown said. "The point is to prevent these worker deaths with a fully-staffed, robust Cal-OSHA that can conduct effective investigations and issue fines that are a genuine deterrent."

Stephen Knight, executive director of WorkSafe in Oakland, which helps write policy for safer workplaces in California, noted that Alco has a long record of failing to maintain safe worksites, which has "tragically caused several workers to lose their lives."

He added: "The cost to their families is incalculable, and we can only guess at the many other incidents and injuries that have likely also taken place."

Alco's past

This is only the latest Cal-OSHA citation against Alco, which has a long history of violations – now totalling 70 resulting from 23 inspections dating back to 1991 – including penalties assessed for the deaths of two other employees.

Ray Alfaro was killed on March 31, 2022, at Alco's yard in Stockton, when he was crushed by 4,000 pounds of bundled wire that were stacked on top of each other and fell on top of him.

Cal-OSHA [fined Alco \\$18,000](#) after Alfaro's death, but Alco contested that. The case is still pending, and the fine is still unpaid, three years later, records show.

And on June 30, 2017, Alberto Anaya was killed when the wheels of a large machine, called a screw conveyor, caught a crack in the concrete floor and the frame collapsed on top of him.

OSHA fined the company \$45,000 for Anaya's death.

Alco appealed and paid only \$7,000 after Administrative Law Judge Kevin J. Reedy ordered that the agreement was OK, records show.

There is no central database that specifically compares the death or injury rate of companies in the metal recycling business.

So, KTVU pored through federal OSHA records from 2015 to 2025 to compare Alco's citation and death rate to nine other metal scrap recycling companies in California.

Alco had the highest death rate in the last decade of any metal scrap recycler of those reviewed, a review of OSHA data shows.

Cal-Osha's powers, limitataions

Cal-OSHA only has the power to shut down portions of a company, like a particular machine or zone.

But the state agency does not have the power to close companies completely. When companies fix the problem, they are allowed to reopen and go back to work.

The Source

Cal-OSHA, prior reporting.