

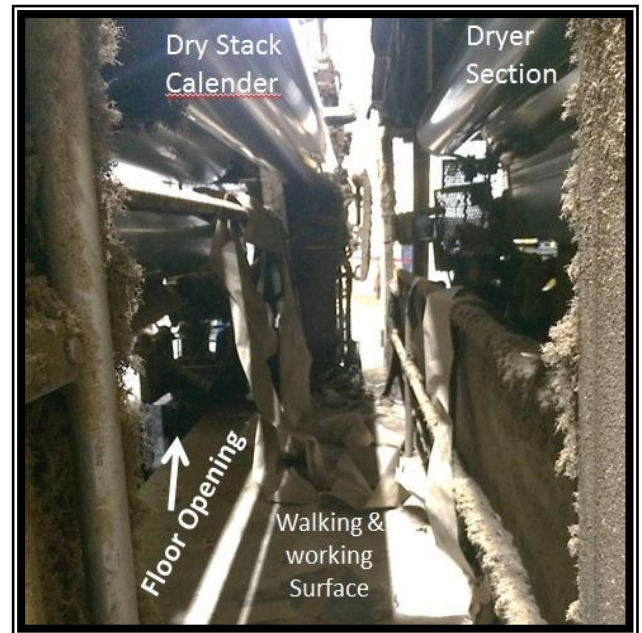


# HAZARD ALERT

## Fatal Accident Involving a Hydropulper Tank of a Paper Making Machine

A USW member was fatally injured in a paper mill after falling into a hydropulper tank through a floor opening on the backside of the dry stack calender rolls of a paper making machine. The victim was seen in a crouched position in a narrow space with his back towards the calender rolls, next to the thread pan, facing the dryer section, immediately before he fell. The crew was in the standard process of rethreading the paper machine due to a sheet break. It is still unclear what caused him to move from his last known position to the opening of the hydropulper tank that contained water, paper stock and slurry.

The narrow space was previously equipped with a nip-calender guard that was positioned approximately two feet off the floor. However, during an outage six days prior to the accident, the deteriorated mesh and bottom portion of the guard were removed by a contractor. The upper metal frame of the guard was in place at the time of the accident. The guard may have been original equipment from the manufacturer. The removed portions of the guard were not reinstalled before resuming production. The area where the victim fell did not have a dedicated personal-fall-arrest-system.



### Recommendations to Prevent Recurrence:

- Eliminate or re-configure floor openings so that workers cannot fall into them.
- Guard every floor opening that workers can fall into by use of a standard railing/toeboard or a suitable cover. If a cover is used it must be suitable for the environment (i.e. vibration, dampness, strength, secured or hinged) and be user friendly.
- Provide a standard railing/toe-board around every open-sided floor, or runway where workers could be injured in a fall.
- Regardless of height, if workers can fall into or onto dangerous machines, vats or equipment, standard railings/toe-boards must be provided.
- In places where engineering improvements are not possible near openings other means of fall protection or personal-fall-arrest-systems may be required (such as, safety nets, a safety harness and lanyard with proper anchor points).
- Use 'Management of Change' procedures to identify, eliminate and/or control hazards.
- Use engineering controls such as automating threading equipment and functioning thread pan(s).
- Conduct a comprehensive fall hazard analysis for routine and non-routine tasks.
- Maintain housekeeping to prevent slips, trips and falls.



60 Blvd of the Allies  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222  
safety@usw.org  
(412) 562-2581

This hazard alert is based on an actual incident, and reflects our best understanding of the incident at the time it was written. However, many incidents have multiple causes; this alert may not cover all of them. The purpose of the alert is to illustrate workplace hazards; it is not intended to be a comprehensive report on the incident.