



Health, Safety & Environment Department

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Safety Alert

Fatality at Construction Site

Pipe Liner Entangled in Winch

On May 1, 2007, Roberto Carlos Sandoval Cruz, a Pipe Liner of local 15024 was running a winch when he stumbled, fell or was pulled into the wind-up while working for Spiniello Companies contracting for Aqua Penn in Havertown, Pennsylvania, Lower Merion Township.

Preliminary results of an investigation by the USW indicates the following

Carlos died instantly at about 2:45 p.m., May 1, 2007 in Havertown.

The winch is attached to a flat bed truck. It is used to pull steel cable through cast iron water pipes as part of a process to clean and re-line the pipe with cement. This process is used throughout the country. The truck and winch set-up or a similar set-up is also used extensively in many operations.

The major concern is the winch set-up. Even though many of the pipe re-lining companies have a policy that requires the operator to stay in the cab of the truck while the winch is running, the policy is a poor substitute for safety devices that are required for protection of workers from being wrapped up into the winch.

An emergency cable should be installed around the perimeter of the winch for emergency shut down. In addition, after inspection of three different company's equipment, it was found that the set-ups of this type equipment was lacking in all three companies. Not only is the E-stop cable not installed on any of the winches inspected, but there is also a hole in the floor plate directly in front of the winch where someone can stumble and fall into the winch.

Any company using this type of equipment should inspect and update the equipment with an E-stop and a floor plate should be installed directly in front of the winch.

Lessons Learned

- A policy that requires a person not go near a piece of equipment while it is running is a poor substitute for OSHA's machine guarding and walking working surfaces requirements. What we witnessed in this case is policies such as these do not take in account the many reasons in unusual situations that a worker might need to go near such equipment. Without the required and needed safe guards the risk of injury and or death can and will eventually occur.

Recommendations

- Any company using this type of equipment should inspect and update the equipment with an E-stop and a floor plate should be installed directly in front of the winch.
- Other devices such as a cable alignment device that guides the cable to wrap evenly on the drum should be installed.

