

Baling and Compacting Work Fatality File



Case 1

A 16-year-old male produce market worker died as a result of crushing injuries from a baling machine used to compress waste cardboard boxes for disposal and recycling. The victim, working alone in the basement of a small produce market, was crushing and baling cardboard boxes when he was caught in the hydraulic ram. An investigation of the incident by the police found that the baler was being operated improperly, with the loading chamber door open and the door safety interlocks bypassed with a wad of paper. When the victim was found, it appeared that he had been starting a new bale. The wire had been threaded through the compression chamber and secured to the outside of the compactor, and a flattened box was in place in the base of the compactor chamber. The victim may have leaned over into the compression chamber trying to quickly adjust a tie wire or the base box when he was caught by the ram as it moved downward.

Case 2

A 24-year-old male machine operator died from crushing injuries after he fell into a baling machine used to compress and bale waste cardboard for recycling. The victim worked alone loading, compressing, and moving completed bales to a storage area. The victim was last seen around 5 p.m. during a break. Between 5:30 and 7 p.m., the victim may have climbed up the outside walls of the conveyor to dislodge a piece of cardboard that was jamming the conveyor belt – an act he had been observed performing in the past. Workers reported that occasionally cardboard would become lodged in the top part of the hopper just under the conveyor (an area that measures 28 by 8 inches), causing the hopper to jam. During this action, the victim may have lost his balance and fallen into the compression chamber, thereby tripping the automatic sensor that indicated that the chamber was full and caused the baler to cycle.