Confined Spaces: Recognition, Permit Requirements, and Rescue Planning Fatality File



Confined Space Fatality – Worker Dies Inside Water Tank

OKLAHOMA CITY – An Oklahoma City employer's failure to follow federal safety procedures left a 30-year-old worker suffering fatal asphyxiation as they tried to make repairs inside a water tank at a McClain County wellsite in September 2023, a federal investigation has found.

Responding to the report of a fatality in Purcell, investigators with the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration determined the worker had entered a permit-required confined space to fix a leaking bulkhead valve in a production tank and then lost consciousness. Two co-workers entered the tank in a failed rescue attempt and suffered effects from exposure to low atmospheric conditions. Neither sustained injuries.

OSHA investigators found the employer, C&M Roustabout Services LLC failed to evaluate the tank for hazardous conditions – including testing the atmosphere – and did not use protective systems to prevent worker injuries, a violation of federal regulations.

Source: https://www.dol.gov