Fiancee Makes Horrible Discovery



The middle-aged farm worker was found by his fiancée in a large barn. The victim was face down on the manure-covered floor and tethered with a short rope to a dead hog that had been discovered earlier in the day. While the farmer's brother took the other live hogs to market, the victim was attempting to clean the manure pits and remove the dead hog at the same time.

He stirred up the manure pits beneath the slat-floored barn with a tractor and stirring pump, utilizing the power take-off outside the building. The agitation of the manure pits released several gases including methane, hydrogen sulfide, carbon monoxide and ammonia.

The cause of death was determined to be "asphyxiation caused by toxic gases." The man had no heart disease or other health disorder.

The farm worker should have known the dangers of the gases released by manure pits when stirring and cleaning them. He might have saved his life if he had been wearing an air pack and tethering rope when he entered the manure pit. He shouldn't have been in the building during the agitation process. His building should have been equipped with ventilation fans and retractable curtains used during the cleaning procedure. Before entering, he should have exchanged the air at least five times after the pit agitation processs that removes up to 99 percent of the toxic gases.

Source: Iowa Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program, Case Report 03IA058