Maintenance Worker Falls Overboard



A maintenance worker at a power utility dam was working alone on a tugboat. He was on the deck of the tug, attempting to empty two 45-gallon drums of bilge water by tipping each of them over the side of the small vessel. He was not wearing a lifejacket, presumably because the passageway to the engine room was too narrow for him to squeeze through with it on.

Evidence indicated that he had slipped on the deck while tipping over one of the 450-pound drums. The deck at one time had been painted with a non-slip material, which had worn off. Spilled bilge water had made the deck even more slippery.

Apparently the worker then fell over the low railing into the cold lake water. He was not wearing a life jacket (Personal Flotation Device) and he could not swim. After the tugboat was found adrift, the victim’s body was found in 23 feet of water.

It is important to maintain non-slip material and other protective devices. It was also dangerous for him to work alone. A companion might have been able to save this worker by throwing him a life ring. As well, the worker might have been able to save himself if he had known how to swim. A Personal Flotation Device (PFD) could also have saved his life. If you work or play around water, always wear a PFD. It is important, as well, for everyone to learn to swim – it’s a skill which could make the difference between life and death.