Man Drowns in Standpipe

An irrigation district canal worker drowned after falling into a standpipe while trying to shut off the water flow.

A nearby home was being flooded because of a broken water line. And the victim was dispatched to the pipe to shut it off. Later, the supervisor tried to contact the man via portable radio and could not reach him. The victim was found in the pipe, which measured four feet (1.2 meters) in diameter and 16 feet (4.9 meters) high, with only his foot above the water.

The standpipe and water shutoff valve wheel were not safe. The ladder up the outside of the pipe was not directly under the valve, so the worker had to climb to the top of the standpipe, work his way over to where he could reach the wheel, then balance himself on the top edge of the pipe while he turned the wheel. The ladder inside the pipe had rungs that were broken, bent and missing.

Workers must be aware of danger signs. There should be a platform with railings and fixed ladders that are not broken. Regular worksite inspections should look for loose, worn or damaged rungs, corroded parts (including bolts and rivet heads), damaged handrails or deteriorated masonry.

Be sure to report hazards to your employer.