Marina Drowning



A marina employee drowned after he fell into the water at a boat launching slip. He had been repairing some storm-damaged water pipes below the edge of the slip and was last seen on a pontoon raft in the shallow water. Marina customers later found the victim floating facedown.

A new part-time employee, the victim had been responsible for general yard work such as painting boat bottoms and doing light plumbing.

The marina, located on a bay leading to the ocean, was equipped with docks and slips for small craft. The business provided docking, boat maintenance and repairs.

The customers who found him started cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) immediately. This was continued by emergency responders who took him to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead, an hour after being found.

Investigators discovered the small, privately-owned marina had no safety program. They also learned the victim was under doctor’s care for a seizure disorder and a heart condition.

They recommended an analysis of hazards, hazard control and safety training to prevent future drownings. They also recommended employers consider the use of personal flotation devices (PFDs) under certain circumstances for people working near or on the water. PFD use could be made mandatory in high-risk situations, such as by a worker who:

- is a poor swimmer
- has a physical or medical limitation that could prevent self-rescue
- is working alone near deep water
- is working near rough or cold waters

Could there be a similar situation in your workplace?