Office Safety Fatality Report

Tax Auditor Dies At His Desk, Not Found For Two Days

Standing Working in the tax profession can sometimes be lonely – with long hours and lots of document intensive, as opposed to people intensive, work to do – but a Finnish tax office found out just how lonely it can be. A tax official in Finland died at his desk while checking tax returns – and nobody noticed for two days.

The unidentified man, who was in his 60s, died in his Helsinki office while checking tax returns. He had his office door closed at the time. According to a government official at the office, "People thought he wanted to work in peace and no-one disturbed him."

Anita Wickstroem, director at the Helsinki tax office, told AFP news agency, "He was very much working alone and often visiting companies, while his friends and colleagues who used to have lunch or coffee with him were busy in meetings or outside the office at the time."

Two days later, a friend called to have lunch. When the man didn't answer, his colleagues discovered that the man had died.

There were about 30 employees in the same department who were on the same floor at the time. The head of personnel at the office said everyone at the tax office was feeling "dreadful."

It's worth pointing out that the story, which was recently reported by Prof. Paul Caron at the excellent Tax Prof Blog, isn't exactly recent: it was reported by the BBC and the New York Times, among others, in 2004.

The story is, however, timely. This time of year, folks in the tax profession tend to rush by each other: there are deadlines to meet and clients to make happy. But do me a favor: say hello to the folks you work with once in a while – even a quick knock on the door with a wave. Bring an extra cup or two of Starbucks or a box of Krispy Kreme doughnuts by the office and offer them around.