Punch Stabs Press Operator



A punch press operator was killed when a punch struck him in the chest, puncturing his heart. He had been working in a plant where construction machinery was manufactured and repaired. He had been operating a plasma cutter in the welding and assembly plant, cutting plates from iron slabs to attach rubber to a belt conveyor.

No one witnessed the fatal incident. However, co-workers assume he went to the punch press machine to punch holes in the iron for fasteners. It appears he installed a punch and a die on the machine and positioned one of the iron plates. He then stepped on a footswitch. The punch broke free and hit him on the left side of his chest. He was found on the floor some distance from the machine, and it appeared he had moved there himself. He was taken by ambulance to a hospital, where he died from loss of blood. The punch had punctured his chest and pierced his heart.

Investigators found the punch broke free because it was not strong enough to handle the work and was damaged by corrosion. When press and shearing machines are operated, processed materials and machine parts are broken often by shock and other damage. These flying objects can injure and kill operators. Enclosures and covers need to be installed around these machines to guard workers from such lethal flying objects.

Could something like this happen in your workplace? Make sure all equipment is in good condition and adequately guarded. Identify and eliminate hazards. Get the training and information you need to protect yourself.