Rollers crush mill operator



A mill operator at a rubber compound plant died when caught between two rollers on the lamination machine he was operating.

Investigators later assumed he had been bending over or crouched under the machine, removing excess material, when his right hand became caught between the final trim roller and the idler roller. This pulled his arm and upper torso between the rollers.

A co-worker walking by found the operator caught in the rollers. The emergency shut-off tripwire cable above the final trim roller had been inaccessible while the operator was under the final trim rollers, and the other tripwire, although accessible, was not working.

The supervisor called the plant nurse, who found no vital signs. While they waited for the ambulance, workers took apart the idler roller to free the victim. Emergency medical services personnel continued cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). At the hospital he was pronounced dead.

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) investigators concluded that, in order to prevent similar incidents, employers should:
• Check before each shift to see if emergency shut-off devices work properly.
• Provide machine guarding to prevent operators from having any parts of their bodies in the danger zone during operation.
• Consider the use of special hand tools (such as gripping devices) for placing and removing materials in the processing area.

The laminating machine that killed this worker was operating unchanged since 1979. Supervisors can contact machine manufacturers and, if possible, retrofit guards onto old machinery.