

# Stamping Press Crushes Young Worker



## INCIDENT

At about 6 am on March 5/2014, Erik Deighton, aged 23, was operating a stamping machine when it became jammed. He tried to clear the obstructions when the machine cycled to stamp a part and crushed the victim to death.

Erik was working a 12-hour shift starting at midnights at Colonial Plastics, a factory in Shelby Township, Michigan that supplies parts to auto, aerospace and appliance manufacturers.

## NEED TO KNOW

A young shift worker was just getting his life going when his life was taken away from him while he was working.

## BUSINESS / REGULATIONS

Was Deighton's tragic death an accident? Or could it have been prevented? The truth is that in most cases local law enforcement agencies are not trained to recognize work-related safety-issues-including preventable tragedies that are not "accidents". In this case, a local law official actual description of the event said that this accident was "preventable". The official said the stamping press was a large machine with doors on two sides. The official went on to say that "So even though the guy was leaning through an open door," "the machine thought both doors were closed and that's why the guy on the other side couldn't see him [the victim] and was able to start the machine or cycle it."

A stamping press, slamming down tons of metal with brute force, can be incredibly dangerous. Accepted industry practice requires this equipment to be designed so that it cannot operate when a worker is inside or anywhere near the dangerous parts of the machine. If Colonial Plastics had invested in modern machine guarding technology, along with other safety precautions, the incident could not have taken place as described – and Erik Deighton would probably still be alive.

Michigan OSHA, after investigating the incident, charged Colonial Plastics with seven serious health and safety violations. The agency proposed a \$20,850 penalty, which was eventually reduced to \$8,400. Among other failings, the company didn't provide proper training, lockout procedures or machine guarding.

Victims in these tragic cases are often soon forgotten. But the families are the one who suffer and endure the pain of losing a loved one. Erik's sister Lauren Deighton had moving and heartfelt comments about the loss of her brother.

"He was my brother, and one of the kindest, deepest souls on Earth. He was so creative. He drew, read, and sang at the top of his lungs. He was my mom and dad's only son, and she worked so hard to make sure he graduated high school and was on the path to success. He got this job after having a misguided period in his youth where he, like other boys, was rowdy and challenged authority."

"However, he finally was on the right track and working hard at a job that made decent money, which he was so proud of. He worked midnights, 12 hours straight, 5 to 6 days a week, and the factory he worked at was understaffed. His death was most certainly preventable. And now I and my family have to live out the rest of our lives without him. And truly, he was the only one who insisted upon making life joyful. I won't ever forget him and I won't ever forgive this."

## **STATISTICS**

Erik Deighton was "crushed" to death. There was an incident where a worker, was crushed to death whereby there a huge fine was leaved in the sum of 2,6 million in 2018. This latter person was crushed while cleaning a sensor fault in a robotic conveyor halt.

The most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics (B.L.S) data, manufacturing plants reported approximately 2,000 accidents that led to workers suffering crushed fingers or hands, or had limbs amputated in machine related accidents.

The rate of amputations in manufacturing was more than twice as much (1.7 per 10,000 full time employees) as that of all private industry (0.7).

## **PREVENTION**

Every worker has the legal right to be provided a safe work place. Every employer has the legal obligation to provide workers with a safe working environment.

In this particular case, if Colonial Plastics had invested n modern machine guarding technology, the incident could not have taken place as described, and, Erik would probably still be alive. But apart from investing in more modern technology, Colonial Plastics should have implemented better safety precautions including proper training and lockout procedures.

Had these two procedures been implemented, this "accident" would likely have been prevented.