Worker Crushed While Checking For Hot Bearings

A worker, who had recently been given the responsibility of safety inspector for the gravel pit where he worked, was killed when he was crushed in a piece of moving machinery.

He was trying to place his hand on a bearing to see if it had overheated. He had climbed over the edge of the stone conveyor and somehow was caught between the three-foot wide conveyor belt and a large pulley. He was killed instantly.

Investigation of the fatal incident showed that workers at the site were unfamiliar with lock and tag procedures, in which a machine is isolated from a power source so it cannot run during maintenance procedures. The victim had been given the title of safety inspector even though he had been on the job less than two years and had been given no real safety training.

The practice of putting a hand on a bearing to see if it was too hot was common at the work site. The large conveyor had been modified by the addition of a platform under the pulley so workers could reach the bearings more easily to service them. However, to reach the platform, workers had to either climb the girders supporting the large conveyor or climb over the conveyor belt. Although the victim died instantly and could not have been saved, the incident also disclosed a lack of first aid knowledge among his co-workers.

This fatality might have been prevented by adequate safety training and a system of locking and tagging equipment that is undergoing maintenance or adjustment. Use of heat-sensing or infrared equipment would have made close-up inspection of the bearings unnecessary. A guarded ladder or steps to the platform would also be recommended to prevent falls and other incidents. Moving parts of machinery should be shielded – and this should begin with the manufacturing engineers. Basic first aid should be part of every safety training program.