Worker Drowns In Underground Water Reservoir



A worker drowned in an aqueduct after he became trapped in a drain.

A student who was unfamiliar with the surroundings, untrained and afraid of water was working with the victim. The two were working in hip-deep water when the victim was pulled down into the drain by the water pressure. The aqueduct was located underground and was not easily accessible by rescuers. The young assistant was not able to rescue him.

An investigation of this drowning came up with a number of recommendations to make this and similar workplaces safer. This incident occurred in a confined space, where strict work safety procedures should have been in place. There should have been permanent markers on the walls so workers could determine the depth of water in the aqueduct. Also, there should have been markers to identify the location of drain holes, and permanent grate covers over them to prevent someone from becoming trapped. Easier access to the underground aqueduct would improve safety. A reliable means of communication should have been in place. Yelling and hoping someone hears is not reliable. Finally, more entrances were needed for emergency personnel and equipment.

Workers need adequate training, especially important in a hazardous area such as this. It is important that jobs be suitable for the worker too. Someone with an extreme fear of water or of heights does not belong in those situations.