

Fatality Narrative

Laborer Dies from Heat Stroke *

Industry: Water and sewer line and related structures
Occupation: Laborer
Task: Laying underground water line
Type of Incident: Heat stroke

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On June 26, 2006, a construction laborer suffered heatstroke while laying pipe. The 27-year-old victim had just been hired and was not acclimatized to working in hot weather. His current employer, a construction company performs various types of outdoor construction. On the day of the incident a four-member work crew, including the victim, were laying an underground water line alongside a public road. The job was to lay sections of 12-inch PVC pipe in a 4-foot trench. The victim was carrying, laying, and connecting pipe and then leveling the trench. The crew began work at 8:30 a.m. and continued through the day. It was a hot day, with the temperature ranging from 82 to 105 degrees and the humidity from 46 to 56%. The worksite was mostly exposed to direct sun. The employer had provided drinking water for the workers. It was reported that the victim consumed nearly 5 bottles of water during the day. At about 3 p.m. he became ill and his employer suggested that he rest in the shade. About 15 minutes later, his coworkers noticed he was slumped over and unconscious. Paramedics transported the victim to a hospital, where he died six days later from complications related to heat stroke.



Requirements/Recommendations

(! Indicates items required by code)

- ! Establish written procedures to prevent heat related illness.
- ! Train all employees who may be exposed to potential heat hazards, in the recognition of the risks and prevention measures concerning heat related illness.
- ! Train all supervisors in all elements of employee training and in procedures necessary for ensuring protection of employees.
- ! Provide adequate drinking water (potable) for all employees; encourage them to drink water throughout the day.
- ! Make sure first-aid trained personnel are available to provide quick and effective first-aid for persons who show signs of heat related illness.
- ! Employers need to have a variety of heat related illness prevention measures, including regular breaks, promotion of frequent water consumption and a shaded place to rest, in place at their work site in order to address heat exposure situations as they might occur.
- Be aware of weather forecasts. If high temperatures are anticipated for the day, try to start outdoor activities early in the day to take advantage of cooler time of day and plan on quitting earlier to avoid the “heat” of the day.
- Wear appropriate clothing and head covering for hot weather situations, keeping in mind personal safety related to the job that you are doing.
- Work in at least pairs during hot weather and help keep an eye on each other for symptoms of heat related illness.

State Wide Statistics: This was the 36th out of 81 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2006, and was the 10th out of 23 construction-related fatalities.

**This bulletin was developed at the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries to alert employers and employees of a tragic loss of life of a worker in Washington State. The information in this notice is based on preliminary data ONLY and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident or conclusions regarding the cause of the fatality.*

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