

Worker Killed While Clearing Stuck Bowling Pin



What happened?

A community college bowling instructor trying to repair the automated pin-setting equipment at the school's bowling alley died when he became caught in the machinery.

One bowling lane was already malfunctioning when the class began. The instructor paired off the students and got them started on their lessons before excusing himself to go to the mechanical area at the back of the lanes. The instructor was not considered authorized by the employer to perform work on the equipment at the bowling alley and was not trained to work on it.

Nevertheless, it appears the instructor climbed onto the catwalk between lanes two and three to reach a stuck bowling pin. In order to gain access to the pin, he had to extend his head and arm into the pin-setting equipment. But the instructor had failed to switch off the power. Evidently in adjusting a pin, he caused the machinery to complete a cycle, which trapped him and caused the injuries that proved fatal.

A contracted repair technician, contacted by the building coordinator to repair the lane, arrived 15 to 20 minutes later and discovered the instructor.

What can you do to prevent this from happening at your workplace?

- Prior to performing any work on a device, make sure the equipment is de-energized – power sources are shut off and there is no potentially dangerous stored energy.
- Work should be done only by workers who are trained in the energy-control procedures (lock-out/tag-out) of the equipment and are authorized by the employer to perform the work.
- All employees need to be trained to know which equipment requires energy control.

This bulletin was developed by L&I's Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) to alert employers, labor groups, and employees of a tragic loss of life. The information in this bulletin is based on preliminary data and does NOT represent final determinations of the incident or conclusions regarding the cause of the fatality.

Need more information?

Visit www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety/Basics for information on workplace safety and health, rules and policies, sample programs, and general assistance. To contact the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), call 1-800-423-7233.

Interested in a free safety consultation at your workplace?

You may request assistance from DOSH by telephone, letter or in person. The request may be for a complete review of your company's safety and health programs or for help with a specific problem. A consultant will contact you to schedule a time and date for a free, onsite consultation. Visit www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Basics/Assistance/Consultation/consultants.asp for phone numbers and e-mail addresses of consultants in your area.

How does an employee file a complaint?

Employees or employee representatives can file formal complaints with DOSH when they believe a safety or health hazard exists in their workplace. Complaint forms are available in both English and Spanish from your local L&I office or on the Web at www.Lni.wa.gov/safety/Basics/Complaint.

Contact us. We're here to help.