

Worker Killed by Engulfment in Salt Pile



What happened?

A worker was killed after he was engulfed in a pile of salt approximately 30 feet high used to create brine for the production of chlorine.

The worker was last known to be cleaning pumps and monitoring the brine operation. After he failed to respond to a warning alarm and radio page, a team leader went looking for him. The worker could not be immediately located so 911 was called.

Firefighters and law enforcement officers arrived and discovered foot prints on the salt pile and three holes in the pile. A review of surveillance video footage showed the missing worker walking from the east side of the salt pile to the west side of the pile.

Eventually, rescuers found the worker's body engulfed in the salt approximately 20 feet below the top. The county coroner declared the man's death was due to compression asphyxia.

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

- Conduct a job safety analysis (JSA) for those who must work on or around the hazard area. A JSA is a systematic method for identifying hazards at the worksite.

- Have a written policy that addresses access to the hazard area. This should identify who is allowed to work in the area and what type of special training or equipment may be needed.
- Install warning signs around worksite hazards and consider erecting perimeter fencing.
- Train your workers. The job safety analysis will help identify special training needs and hazards associated with the work.

Need more information?

Go to www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety/Basics for information on workplace safety and health, rules and policies, sample programs and general assistance. Call 1-800-423-7233 to contact the Department of Labor & Industries (L&I), Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH).

Interested in a free safety and health consultation at your workplace?

You may request assistance from DOSH by telephone, letter, or in person. You may request a complete review of your company's safety and health status or ask for help with a specific problem. A consultant will contact you to schedule a time and date for a free onsite consultation. Visit www.SafetyConsultants.Lni.wa.gov for contact information for consultants in your area.

How does an employee file a complaint?

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

Contact us. We're here to help.

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