Inadequate Respirator No Protection



A worker cleaning metal pieces prior to repainting was found unconscious at his workstation. Resuscitation by co-workers, firefighters and ambulance attendants failed to revive him.

Methylene chloride formic acid was suspected as a cause of death. The chemical was being used by the worker in combination with a detergent to strip paint from pieces of metal which had failed quality control tests. The victim was using a wire mesh basket to immerse the painted metal in a dip tank which contained the mixture, covered by a two or three inch water barrier. When the paint was removed, the basket containing the metal pieces was lifted over a tub containing water and cleaned with a high pressure hose. Apparently, exposure to the vapors caused the worker to lose consciousness.

Lack of training and lack of proper protective equipment were significant factors in this fatality. The victim had received only brief verbal instruction and then was left on his own. He was wearing a dust mask – totally inadequate as respiratory protection when working with a vaporous chemical.