Unguarded Rollers Trap Operator



A worker was running a machine called a slitter as part of a paper cup manufacturing operation. The press-like machine had heavy rollers. It was 2:30 a.m. . . . the worker was putting in overtime after his usual 3 to 11 p.m. shift. It was usual for him to work alone in this area of the plant. No one knows exactly what happened, but somehow his sweatshirt became entangled in the rollers. He was pulled into the machinery where he was tumbled around violently.

The first co-worker to discover him did not know how to stop the machine. He ran to get the closest supervisor, nearly 200 feet away. The victim appeared to have died instantly, and the actual cause of death was later determined to be a ruptured artery in his chest and multiple trauma.

The company had a policy prohibiting loose clothing, jewelry and unrestrained long hair to prevent entanglement incidents. There were prominent “stop” buttons located on the machine. There was a policy prohibiting adjustments of the machinery without first turning it off, but the equipment lacked a machine guard to prevent accidental contact.

After the fatality, a guard was put into place over the exposed roller, and an electric eye was installed to stop the machine if someone got too close. In addition, a key-lockout procedure was put into place to prevent unintentional start-up of the machinery. Employees were given safety training including how to shut off the machinery in an emergency.

Unguarded machinery is deadly. It can make the smallest mistake your last mistake.